

# Learning to Change

## *School Coaching for Systemic Reform*

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Prepared for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation  
February 2005

Fouts & Associates, L.L.C.



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## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank the many individuals associated with the following organizations who graciously gave their time to share with us their knowledge about and experience with school and district coaching. Without their contributions, this report would not be possible.

- Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools, Oakland, California
- Bay Area School Reform Collaborative, San Francisco, California
- Center for Collaborative Education, Boston, Massachusetts
- Center for Educational Leadership, University of Washington
- Change Leadership Group, Harvard University
- Collaborative Coaching and Learning, Boston, Massachusetts
- Colorado Small Schools Initiative, Denver, Colorado
- National School Reform Faculty, Bloomington, Indiana
- Small Schools Coaches Collaborative, University of Washington
- Southern Maine Partnership, University of Southern Maine
- The Learning Network, Katonah, New York

We would also like to thank the numerous representatives from coaching organizations across the country who took time to provide information over the phone or by e-mail about their program and experience with coaching. We are also indebted to the schools and districts in Washington, Oregon, Maine, North Carolina, Texas, Ohio, and Michigan who opened their schools and offices to us for visits and discussions about coaching. Your willingness to participate in this project is greatly appreciated.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge and thank Dr. Christopher Sink and Marcia Gaylor of Seattle Pacific University for their contributions and assistance in reviewing the literature on coaching in business and education.



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# Learning to Change: School Coaching for Systemic Reform

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of the experienced professional, as mentor, serving as a wise guide to a younger protégé dates back to Homer's *Odyssey*. Mentor was the teacher entrusted by Odysseus to tutor his son, Telemachus. Based on this literary description, we have been provided over the centuries with a lasting image of the wise and patient counselor who serves to shape and guide the lives of younger, less experienced colleagues. (Daresh & Playko, 1991, p. 24)

As the nation's schools are attempting to meet the most recent set of public and government demands, educators and related professionals are seeking ways to effectively change the organizations responsible for student learning. Individuals within these organizations, whether a school or a district, are recognizing that in many instances it is the very nature of the organization itself that must be changed if students are to meet the new learning expectations. However, transforming an institution with the long history of the traditional American school system will require a change in the underlying *beliefs and values* that are the basis for current practices. Those involved with reinventing American schools have recognized that changing these beliefs and values will require considerable adult learning for educators before meaningful modifications in school environments and teaching and learning can take place. The challenge faced by reformers is to find the most effective way to create a comprehensive adult learning environment, something that does not exist in many American schools.

An important element of many school improvement strategies is "capacity building" that includes the development of human and social capital within the organization necessary for successful school and district reform. While this capacity building also focuses on very specific technical skills, such as the collection, understanding, and use of data, it is often primarily concerned with adult perspectives and beliefs about all aspects of the educational experience, including an understanding about the need for change, the process of change, beliefs about student capabilities, and effective teaching practices. The attention given to capacity-building efforts, at least initially, has been focused on the district and building administrators charged with leading this process.

To build this type of internal capacity within the organization, schools and districts have sought and received "technical assistance" that often takes the form of "project coaches." During our work evaluating both school and district reinvention around the country, we found that the approach, function, organization, and purpose of project coaching differ considerably from place to place. We have seen coaches

functioning as instructional experts, one-on-one mentors for senior district leaders, *de facto* project leaders, group facilitators, and group therapists for dysfunctional groups of adults. Labeling the people who perform these services as “coaches” has created a very broad and inexact definition within the profession.

Our examination of the recent and current education literature also revealed several uses of the term “coaching,” but the majority fall into two main areas: 1) coaching as a component of professional development for teachers; and 2) coaching for educators attempting whole school reform. For example, Joyce and Showers (1980) suggested that the outcomes of teacher professional development programs could be strengthened and sustained in part through educational coaching. However, in the last decade the term “change coaching” appeared in the literature, implying coaching that supports school reform. “Change coaches help schools examine their resources – time, money, and personnel – and allocate them more effectively. They develop the leadership skills of both teachers and principals” (Neufeld & Roper, 2003, p. 4). Neufeld and Roper noted that in some instances the term change coach has been dropped in favor of “capacity coaching,” which better represents the goal of developing whole-school capacity rather than just change. Capacity coaching may also be found at the district level, as districts attempt to reinvent their own practices and to lead schools through the reinvention process.

In the following examination of coaching we limit our work to this second area, that is, the coaching function aimed more broadly at systemic educational reform focusing primarily on district and school leadership. This role of coaching does not necessarily exclude an interest in classroom instruction, but rather sees classroom instruction as a component of larger systems change required in the schools. From this perspective, the role of the coach is to work with district and/or school leadership to build capacity within the system leading to a new professional environment in which the leadership causes change, including instructional improvement.

In Part 1 of this report, we examine the literature on coaching, beginning with various definitions and their relationships to the business model. We then describe the major theoretical bases for the beliefs and practices, focusing on cognitive/information processing theory, social interaction learning theory, adult development theory, and organizational theory. Because coaching programs are greatly influenced by constructivist approaches to learning, we include an explanation of those ideas as well. We also include a discussion of the directive or non-directive nature of the coaching process. We conclude this section of the report with an explanation of how all of these ideas are being applied to coaching in the education profession along with the desirable characteristics of individual coaches.

As part of our research into coaching activities in education, we obtained considerable information on a wide variety of coaching organizations from around the country. Sometimes we made direct visits to coaching organizations to meet with coaching leaders and with coaches to discuss their philosophies, approaches, and programs. When possible, we observed actual coaching activities or training. In other

instances we conducted phone interviews with organization leaders and/or coaches. We also gathered considerable information about coaching activities during the school and grantee site visits we conduct as part of our on-going evaluation efforts for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. We analyzed both electronic and hard copy documents gathered from coaching organizations all over the country. Finally, either as part of this project or as part of our foundation evaluation efforts, we visited and interviewed scores of teachers and principals from over 50 schools and 20 districts around the country who are recipients of coaching services.

From these activities we have selected four coaching organizations or programs to describe in some detail in Part 2 of this report. We believe they reflect a good cross-section of coaching activities and approaches from around the country. The first three are university-based organizations whose coaches have had some degree of success in helping schools or districts in the change process. Yet, they reflect differing approaches to and assumptions about coaching. The first organization we describe is the Change Leadership Group (CLG) at Harvard University. The CLG was created specifically to assist districts to make systemic changes, and CLG coaches are directed by a clear set of ideas about why and how institutions should change. We think that the CLG stands in contrast to a number of the coaching programs we examined, which appear to be largely atheoretical in nature. This is not so with the Change Leadership Group, whose coaches have a clear set of ideas guiding their strategies to engage school leaders in building capacity for change within the district.

The second organization described in Part 2 is the Small Schools Coaches Collaborative (SSCC) at the University of Washington, which is in partnership with the National School Reform Faculty and the Coalition of Essential Schools Northwest Center. SSCC coaches facilitate the work of schools through a process-oriented model of support, varying their assistance according to the needs and circumstances of each school. The Collaborative does not have a specific or set coaching program per se; that is, coaches tailor their work with schools and structure the interventions used to the context of each school. One coach described it as a “Whatever the school needs” approach, reflecting a contingency based design to the coaching. We found that this approach, or some limited version of it, was common among many educational coaching organizations.

The third university-based organization is the Southern Maine Partnership (SMP). The SMP, located at the University of Southern Maine, has maintained a commitment since 1986 to improving school practice and to supporting policy development. Specifically charged to promote equity, the SMP works toward four goals: 1) the improvement of teaching, learning, and assessment; 2) the development of school and district capacity to create policy that promotes equity; 3) the ongoing development of local capacity to sustain change; and 4) the development and support of school leaders. The SMP accomplishes these goals through networking, applied assistance, and research, development, and dissemination. Through applied assistance, or coaching, the SMP provides schools and districts throughout the state with strategic support to accomplish their reform efforts. The SMP program is particularly interesting because of the way the

coaches align their work with state standards (the Maine Learning Results) and, at the secondary level, with a state vision for school reform (*Promising Futures: A Call to Improve Learning for Maine's Secondary Students*). This document calls on secondary schools to bring all students to the high learning standards described by the Maine Learning Results through equity, rigor, and personalization. In facilitating this “call to action,” SMP coaches provide technical assistance to schools while at the same time pushing them to realize the goals put forth by the state.

We conclude Part 2 of this report with a description of coaching in the Bellingham School District in Bellingham, Washington. In contrast to the first three organizations that provide external coaches to the schools, coaching in this school district was a “bottom-up” development designed to create an adult learning community to increase student achievement. In the Bellingham District, coaching began with external coaches through The Learning Network, but they soon began to develop and utilize primarily their own coaches. At the core of the coaching process is a belief that the key to increased student achievement and systemic change is adult learning. In the Bellingham District, all adults—the teachers, the principals, the superintendent, and even the coaches—are expected to learn and progress together in a way that results in improved student learning. Although we stated earlier that we limited our study of coaching programs to just those that focus on systemic change and not classroom instruction, we decided to include the Bellingham model because of its all encompassing and unique nature. We encountered no other approach to school improvement like it in our study.

In Part 3 we provide a listing, brief description, and contact information for major coaching organizations and programs that focus primarily on district or school-wide coaching for systemic change. We have intentionally not included those organizations whose primary focus is direct classroom instruction, content coaching, and/or coaching of teachers on instructional techniques. In the instance where an organization offers both systemic or leadership coaching and instructional/classroom coaching, we included the organization in the listing if the systemic coaching appeared to be a major effort of the organization. Our hope is that we have included most appropriate organizations, but recognize that the field of education changes rapidly and such organizations come and go on a regular basis. Any exclusions are unintentional, and we welcome updated information when available.

Finally, in Part 4 we draw some conclusions from our examination of coaching organizations and the experiences of schools with which we have had contact. Our intent is to challenge our thinking as educators and to offer some direction for organizations offering coaching support to schools and districts working to meet the new expectations of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## Defining Coaching

In the broadest sense, *coaching* is a term used to describe a number of related strategies for improving performance, whether it be sports performance (the football coach), business performance (the executive coach), or teaching performance (peer and

expert coaching). A common way to think about coaching is as a process for developing the present and future capacities of employees. Typically, coaching is at least somewhat developmental in nature and involves specific practices such as observations, conferencing, professional dialogue, and collaboration. Coaching can be directed primarily at the individual, at individuals within groups, or at organizational systems. It may intersect with particular aspects of counseling, therapy, mentoring, and supervision, but it is none of these exclusively.

As a process, coaches are concerned with the development of the person receiving the coaching, but it is important that this activity be differentiated with other processes designed to change individuals and their behavior. For example, coaching and counseling and/or psychotherapy all share the goals of changing individuals' thinking and behaviors. Yet, most coaching programs are careful not to cross over into the domain of these other processes and set limits to the type and degree of deeply personal communication activities allowable. Fitzgerald and Berger (2002) make the following useful distinction between business coaching and therapy:

The goal of coaching is to improve a person's effectiveness at work in ways that are linked to overall business strategy. To this end, a coach will sometimes guide individuals toward increased awareness of how their thoughts and emotional reactions lead to problematic behaviors in the workplace. Therapy may share coaching's goals of improved personal effectiveness and increased awareness of problematic thoughts and emotional reactions that may impede work effectiveness. But therapy also addresses non-work aspects of an individual's life and could involve in-depth explorations of the client's early history, including relationships with parents and other family members – issues only tangentially related to business effectiveness. (p. 214)

Therefore, for most coaching situations there is a limit to the degree to which a coach will deal with the psyche of an individual, while in a psychotherapeutic relationship there may be no limitations.

In sports, for example, a coach works with an athlete on improving his/her mental and physical approach to a game to maximize overall performance. In business, a coach might assist trainees, managers, or leaders to strengthen personal efficiency and to improve interpersonal communication effectiveness. In education, a coach works with a teacher to improve instructional abilities and thus to improve student learning. In each of these instances, there could be deep-seated personality characteristics within the individual that may need attention to improve effectiveness, but that, in all probability, is beyond the scope of the assistance provided by a coach. This does create some limitations on the type of person likely to benefit from coaching. The role of the coach is to take a reasonably functioning person and to make them better, not to address deep-seated personal issues better left to other professionals.

Whether for education, business, or sports, the primary goal of coaching is to improve performance. Depending on situational needs, coaching may be directed at

improving the performance of individuals or of larger organizations, and may be provided for remediation; for enriching sound, established people and programs; or for building capacity to respond to social and environmental changes. Greco (2001) described coaching as a strategy to facilitate improvement in individual performance.

[In this model, the goal of coaching] is to help a person find out what he wants to change about his current situation and to help him determine what he needs to implement in order to get what he wants . . . . It is not consulting, it is not career counseling, it is not training. It is more about asking questions. (p. 30)

### **Executive Coaching in the Business Model**

A growing field in the business world is *executive coaching* designed specifically for building capacity within a leader for guiding change in an organization, something very important in an educational setting as well. Giglio and Diamante (1998) provided a rationale for executive coaching with this focus.

The resilient executive is able to manage and balance the contrasting external and internal demands and adjust elements to keep the system in equilibrium. The successful organization of the future will have executives that have been coached on how to be resilient. This resiliency will afford the executive an opportunity to analyze the many systems in the organization and make well informed decisions in order to move the firm forward. (p. 93)

As noted by one business consultant:

In recent years, there has been particularly rapid growth in the use of one-on-one executive coaching. Among the organizations adopting this practice are: American Express, the American Management Association, AT&T, Citibank, Colgate, Levi Strauss, Northern Telecom, NYNEX Corporation, and Proctor & Gamble. (Olivero, Bane, & Kopelman, 2001, p. 461)

Described as a process of working individually with business leaders and trainees, executive coaching is intended to “help them face the enormous challenges of staying competitive in a fast-changing marketplace, motivating an increasingly diverse workforce, and delivering improved bottom-line results” (Fitzgerald & Berger, 2002, inside jacket). Executive coaching is utilized at an organizational level as well, where it is effective in helping business leaders “address specific skill deficits, enhance performance, and grow into expanded leadership roles” (inside jacket). For example, Ennis (2002) described programmatic executive coaching as a

planned effort designed to meet the needs of multiple executives in the context of business requirements. Usually linked to leadership development initiatives and managed by HR, programmatic coaching can include 360-degree feedback

debriefings or a limited number of coaching sessions to supplement a training program. (p. 158)

Ennis stressed that executive coaching “should be aligned with an executive development strategy that is firmly grounded in [a] company’s business strategy” (p. 159).

The coaching literature in business defines the process through a variety of activities, including goal-setting, feedback, and collaborative problem-solving aimed at helping managers and executives to function effectively in a variety of work situations. A researcher defined an organizational coach as:

[someone who] can take a fresh perspective and approach when analyzing organizational processes and one who has nothing to gain by taking a position . . . the primary task facing the executive coach is to gather data from the executive and from those with whom the executive interacts in order to view the various “realities” and to assist the executive in planning strategies for imposing congruence, as well as building skills that foster continual monitoring and maintenance of congruent cognitive models. (Giglio & Diamante, 1998, p. 2)

Finally, executive coaching has been defined in terms of how it differs from counseling and mentoring:

Coaching is, exclusively, a process focusing on enhanced performance. Coaching should not be confused with counseling or mentoring. The former addresses the employee’s emotional state. The latter is a means whereby a seasoned colleague – often at a more senior level – shares his/her experience with a view to “fast track” the career growth of a high performance employee. (Burdett, 1998, p. 2)

Executive coaches, then, are employed for the general purpose of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of trainees, managers, and leaders in work situations for the broader purpose of increasing productivity. Typically accomplished through one-on-one interactions, executive coaching utilizes specific strategies such as goal setting, feedback, and collaborative problem solving.

Like so many other areas of education, various business models appear to serve as the bases for coaching practices in education. In the development of these models, program developers have relied on a variety of theories from organizational development, developmental psychology, cognitive psychology, and systems theories, to name just a few. In the following section we provide a brief overview of the major theories and ideas that are the foundation for many current coaching practices.

## **Theoretical Models**

While the idea of coaching to improve practice inherently makes sense, it is important to determine what theoretical constructs, if any, underlie the various coaching programs. We say this for two reasons. First, we believe that professional practices that

are guided by clear and sound ideas will produce superior results. Therefore, identifying those ideas that serve as the basis for practice will help create coaching models that are most effective. Second, for our task here the theoretical models serve as an effective way to categorize and discuss the various approaches to coaching, along with their goals, purposes, and techniques. These frameworks allow us to discuss similarities and differences among the coaching models in an organized way.

During our examination of the literature we were able to locate numerous references to coaching in a variety of articles, the majority of which were “how to” and “the need for” type of articles. We were able to find only a few articles in which a clear theoretical model of coaching was explained, and only a limited number of empirical research studies. Overall, in both business and education, and particularly in education, the literature reveals relatively weak theoretical foundations to the practices and often little attention to the ideas underlying the whole process of coaching. In describing the coaching process, few authors articulated a theoretical model they are following in their coaching practices. Consequently, in many instances we were left with the task of identifying a theoretical model, if any, *implied* by the coaching practices advocated. Oftentimes the coaching appeared to be an eclectic or “common sense” approach based on an individual’s own experience in a given setting.

From the coaching literature we identified four major theoretical positions or categories that serve as a framework for discussing coaching goals and practices. These include cognitive/information processing theory, social interaction learning theory, adult development theory, and organizational theory. The first three of these focus primarily on the individual, while the last one focuses primarily on the collective workings of the organization. In addition, we found that coaching programs were greatly influenced by constructivist approaches to learning. Constructivism has become such a broad term that it encompasses several of the other theories, but we have chosen to discuss it separately.

It is important to note again, however, that in only a handful of studies did the authors discuss or present a philosophical foundation. Instead, the four theories and the role of constructivist thought were implied after an analysis of the terminology and strategies used in the coaching program. Three of the four theories emerged from cognitive psychology, while the fourth is organizational theory. In practice, there is considerable overlap among the models, and we recognize this. For example, we saw components of at least two or more of these models in many programs we examined. Brief descriptions of the models are provided in the following pages.

### **Cognitive (Information) Processing Theories**

Information processing (IP) is one of several branches of cognitive psychology that attempts to explain how learning occurs. According to this approach, the mind takes in information, processes it, and stores it for later retrieval in much the same way a computer handles information (input-process-output). The IP model places great importance on both short-and long-term memories. For example, according to the generally accepted stage theory of information processing (Atkinson & Shrifin, 1968), internal and external stimuli are first “registered” as sensory information (sensory



memory). It is at this stage that sensory information is changed into something that the brain can understand, and during this process a memory is created. This memory is thought to be very short (0.5 – 3 seconds). The learner must, at this point, attend to the sensory information if it is to be transferred to the short-term memory (STM).

Information is retained in the STM through organization and repetition. Without “rehearsal” or practice, the information remains active in the STM (or working memory) for only 15-20 seconds; with practice, the information or skills can become automatic. Capacity of the STM is limited. Some information is transferred to the long-term memory (LTM), which is generally thought to have much greater, or even unlimited, storage capacity.

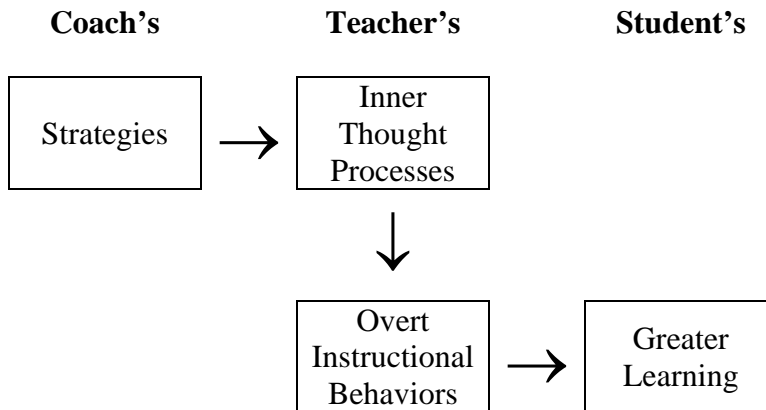
An information processing approach accepts that while covert behaviors such as learning (information processing) cannot be seen, they *can* be inferred, and therefore they can be influenced. Higher order thinking skills, self-reflection, and self-monitoring are central to cognitive processing theory, the assumption being that changes in behavior occur when people intentionally think, reflect, and formulate responses to internal and external stimuli. Specifically, the following are necessary elements in handling a problem or task through a cognitive processing approach:

1. Perceiving and encoding the premises.
2. Transferring them to the working memory.
3. Combining the premises’ representations in the memory to form an integrated representation.
4. Encoding the question.
5. Scanning the representation of the premises to answer the question or to formulate a conclusion (Sutherland, 1992, p. 87).

More practically, cognitive processing involves an interrelationship of problems, strategies, and knowledge (Siegler, 1978) whereby a person approaches a problem using available background knowledge to develop strategies to solve it. Awareness and reflection of one’s own thinking and learning are fundamental elements of IP and drive the cognitive process. Cognitive processing stresses the development of one’s ability to think clearly, to use intellect and reasoning to solve problems, and to make rational decisions.

In short, the role of the cognitive coach is to help the learner change how he/she thinks about things, which in turn leads to new behaviors. Whether the learner is a business executive, a superintendent, or a teacher, the purpose of the coaching activity is to help the individual change inner thought processes. For example, Costa and Garmston (1994) developed a coaching program based in part on cognitive processing theory (Figure 1). They described cognitive coaching as a “consistent, positive disturbance that can bring profound changes to the classroom, school, district, and community” (p. 1). The program recognized three primary goals, including establishing and maintaining trust, facilitating mutual learning, and encouraging growth in autonomous and interdependent actions. According to Costa and Garmston, learning is at the heart of cognitive coaching.

[It is] perhaps, the obvious goal of cognitive coaching. Cognitive coaches encourage and support individuals as they move beyond their present capacities into new behaviors and skills. . . . The relationship presumed by cognitive coaching is that teaching is a professional act and that coaches support teachers in becoming more resourceful, informed, and skillful professionals. Cognitive coaches attend to the internal thought processes of teaching as a way of improving instruction; coaches do not work to change overt behaviors. These behaviors change as a result of refined perceptions and cognitive processes. (p. 3-5)



**Figure 1. Costa and Garmston's (1994) Cognitive Coaching Model**

While the program shares characteristics of other theoretical models, including adult development and social interaction, a strong focus is placed on the intellect.

Cognitive coaching enhances the intellectual capacity of teachers, which in turn produces greater intellectual achievement in students . . . teachers at higher stages of intellectual functioning demonstrate more flexibility, toleration for stress, and adaptability. They take multiple perspectives, use a variety of coping behaviors, and draw from a broader repertoire of teaching models. (Costa and Grams ton, 1994, p. 6)

According to Costa and Garmston (1994), their cognitive coaching model draws upon the work of Bruner, Piaget, Taba, Kohlberg, Fuller, Erickson, and Feuerstein. In addition, they rely on the ideas of Goldhammer (1969), Cogan (1973), and Anderson (1993), who proposed a method of clinical supervision for developing teacher reflection. While coaching is often assumed to be a strategy for addressing overt teacher behaviors, Costa and Garmston believed that “overt behaviors of teaching are the products and artifacts of inner thought processes and intellectual functions. To change over the behaviors of instruction requires the alteration and rearrangement of the inner and invisible cognitive behaviors of instruction” (1994, p. 16).

Results of studies based on the information processing theory and on the work of Costa and Garmston provide limited data on the effectiveness of this theoretical

orientation. In a study comparing the efforts of trained and untrained coaches on teachers and teachers-in-training (Veenman & Denessen, 2001), 93 coaches, including counselors, principals, teachers, and mentors, were trained in a program based on Costa and Garmston's cognitive coaching model. According to researchers conducting the study, the model assumed that "overt instructional behaviors are determined and influenced by teachers' inner thought processes and beliefs. Coaches should therefore pay attention to teachers' internal thought processes of teaching as a means for improving instruction" (p. 413). Results showed that trained coaches had a significant influence on several important coaching attributes, including the development of autonomy, providing feedback, and business-like attitude. Autonomy (empowerment) refers to a coach's ability to strengthen teacher autonomy and "thereby their ability to reflect on their instructional effectiveness and [to] formulate action plans to improve their teaching" (p. 409). Feedback is believed to be a necessary skill in conducting post-conference meetings, and a business-like attitude "indicates a willingness on the part of the trained coaches and teachers to focus on the purpose of the coaching conference – namely, the development of alternatives for the improvement of instructional effectiveness" (p. 410). Although the results were largely positive, researchers concluded, "Whether these coaching skills actually bring about changes in the cognitive processes and instructional behaviors of the teachers and subsequently enhance pupil learning remains to be considered in future research" (p. 412).

In another study, researchers documented the effects of a peer coaching program designed to provide support for new teachers and to provide leadership training for experienced teachers. Participants in the "Peer Sharing and Caring Program" (Raney & Robbins, 1989) were trained to use cognitive coaching strategies based on the cognitive coaching model developed by Costa and Garmston (1994). For example, teachers learned to clarify the purpose of the lesson, to state student outcomes and behaviors, to identify planned teaching behaviors, and to voice potential concerns about the lesson during pre-conference meetings. Self-reflection, self-analysis, and growth were central to the coaching process. Results indicated that coaching became a part of the school's culture, where teachers were not hesitant to consult with one another and where instruction was strengthened through reflection (Raney & Robbins, 1989).

Perkins (1998) conducted a study in which six teachers were trained as peer coaches based in part on Costa and Garmston's (1994) model of cognitive coaching. The study was not designed to assess the impact of the coaches' work, but rather to "describe the skills, relationships, and beliefs apparent in the communication of inexperienced coaches" (Perkins, 1998, p. 239). Participants were given one day of training, and subsequently worked in teams over the course of a semester. Two dropped out early on, leaving a total of four participants. Results indicated,

Participants had difficulty with all of the communication skills and the agenda skills in which they were trained. They more often asked closed-ended rather than open-ended questions, which in turn imbued their statements with negative presuppositions. They paraphrased less and less frequently as their cycles progressed, and they used few probes to facilitate each other's cognition. . . . In

sum, data reveal that coaches did not fully internalize the agenda skills oriented toward getting teachers to articulate precisely their plans and reflections. (Perkins, 1998, p. 248-252)

Several reasons were cited for the negative findings, including the limited training and the absence of a certified Cognitive Coaching trainer, among others. It was suggested, “trainers must find mechanisms for inciting metacognition in the coaches to help them become conscious of what strategy they are employing at a given moment and what options are available to them” (p. 252).

Finally, a study by Wineburg (1995) analyzed the impact of a peer coaching program on 22 elementary and middle school teachers. Teachers received instruction in cooperative learning strategies to implement in their classrooms. Of the 22 teachers, 12 utilized peer coaching methods, and 10 did not. Results indicated that peer coaching had a positive influence on the implementation of cooperative learning structures. “Peer coaching appeared to encourage teachers to reflect on their teaching, to take risks, and to change” (p. 1). Evidence suggested that the coaching process “facilitated the successful transfer of a new strategy from the workshop environment to the classrooms” (p. 1). As with many of these types of studies, peer coaching led to some changes in teacher behaviors in the classroom but not necessarily to increased student learning.

### **Social Interaction/Collaborative Learning Theories**

While references to social interaction theory were virtually non-existent in the programs we reviewed, a majority of the coaching literature noted the importance of collaboration, which is the core of social interaction theory. Many of the research studies and the more practical “how-to” articles cited Joyce and Showers (1980, 1985) as the inspiration for collaborative coaching programs. Beyond that, theoretical bases of collaboration and social interaction theory can be traced to Vygotsky (1962, 1978), Miller (1956), Miller, Galanter, and Pribram (1960), Moll (1989), and Wertsch (1985a, 1985b).

A major theme of Vygotsky’s work is that social interaction is a significant factor in cognitive development and, in fact, leads to more highly developed problem-solving and thinking skills. Vygotsky referred to this learning phenomenon as the Zone of Proximal Development and defined it as the distance between a person’s actual level of development and their potential level of development in the presence of expert guidance or peer collaboration. It was his view that social interaction is highly influential in cognitive development. As adults engage in collaborative conversations, learning becomes a reciprocal experience, moving both parties to deeper levels of thinking and understanding. In the case of coaching, this would mean that both parties, the coach and the “coached,” engage in and benefit from collaborative dialogue, problem-solving exercises, and shared teaching experiences.

Bandura’s (1971, 1982, 1986, 1994) social learning theory is sometimes cited in the coaching literature and explains human behavior in terms of continuous reciprocal

interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences. According to Pajares (2002):

Social cognitive theory is rooted in a view of human agency in which individuals are agents proactively engaged in their own development and can make things happen by their actions. Key to this sense of agency is the fact that, among other personal factors, individuals possess self-beliefs that enable them to exercise a measure of control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Two quotes from Bandura show the essence of this position.

Perceived self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes. (Bandura, 1994, p. 1)

A major function of thought is to enable people to predict events and to develop ways to control those that affect their lives. Such skills require effective cognitive processing of information that contains many ambiguities and uncertainties. In learning predictive and regulative rules people must draw on their knowledge to construct options, to weight and integrate predictive factors, to test and revise their judgments against the immediate and distal results of their actions, and to remember which factors they had tested and how well they had worked. (Bandura, 1994, p. 2)

These ideas can be found in both the design of research and in training models. For example, Licklander (1995) based her study of the effects of peer coaching on teacher skill and efficacy in social learning theory, and O'Connor and Korr (1996) framed their model for enhancing teacher empowerment and self-efficacy in Bandura's social learning theory. "Self-efficacy, as conceptualized by Bandura (1986), relates to an individual's ability to examine alternatives and implement a course of action (for example, a teacher's consideration of and response to classroom problems)" (O'Connor & Kerr, 1996, p. 2).

A connection exists between some collaborative learning theory and Lewin's field theory (1947), which proposed that the group is actually a "dynamic whole" rather than a collection of individuals. As such, the interactive behavior of a group creates the potential for greater gain than does the accumulated behavior of the individuals in a group. As interpreted by Deutsch (1949), this suggested that when people with common goals work together the result could be a stronger process and product. While cooperation and collaboration are not synonymous, social interaction and group dynamics as factors in the learning process are common to both.

The implications of social interaction theory can be seen to some extent in the majority of coaching programs, particularly in education. Indeed, one of the major weaknesses often cited about the professional cultures of schools is the isolated nature of teaching. Many teachers have gone years without observing others or interacting with their colleagues about teaching and learning on a regular basis. Consequently, many coaching programs are designed to correct this deficiency by the creation of *peer* coaching programs to allow teachers to learn from one another through social interaction. The practice of peer coaching is not necessarily limited to teachers however. Peer coaching among principals or business executives follows the same set of ideas—adults interacting with each other in an organized and focused way will lead to learning that is often greater than any individual working in isolation can produce. In education, one of the more popular manifestations of these ideas is the “Critical Friends Groups” found in many schools.

A specific example of Vygotsky’s ideas is found in a study in which students were observed as they collaborated to solve various problems (Forman & Cazden, 1986). In the first phase of the process it was found that students supported, encouraged, and guided each other, while in the second phase students made their own conclusions and resolved their own conflicts. The researchers found that through interpersonal discussions with their peers, students developed new strategies.

Most of the coaching literature we examined made at least some reference to collaboration, and nearly every study reported positive results. Only a few of these, however, could be classified as well-designed studies. One study compared classrooms in which teachers implemented cooperative learning structures (Wineburg, 1995). Of 22 teachers participating in the study, 12 used peer coaching strategies and 10 did not. Peer coaching “afforded teachers the opportunity to engage in professional discourse concerning both children and teaching . . . and, among other ways, occurred when teachers and coaches reflected upon the lessons together” (p. 1). Results indicated that peer coaching did make a difference; “the coaching process facilitated the successful transfer of a new strategy from the workshop environment to the classroom” (p. 1). In another study, one-third of the teachers who participated in a peer coaching program over the course of a semester reported that “having a professional partner” was one of the most important benefits of the program (Mohlman & Bruder, 1987). Teachers spent more time talking about instruction and consulting with colleagues about educational issues. Furthermore, when teachers had the opportunity to collaborate with peers they felt more confident about trying new strategies, lessons, and projects.

Although most of the coaching literature included at least some mention of collaboration, rarely was it discussed as a strategy for developing critical thinking or problem-solving skills as proposed by the neo-Vygotskians. In this view, cognitive development is the result of a dialectical process where learning takes place through problem-solving experiences shared with another person, hence the emphasis on language and social interaction. Instead, collaboration was more often viewed as “working collegially” for the purpose of reducing teachers’ feelings of isolation and for encouraging in-depth dialogue around teaching and learning. For example, Vail,

Tschantz, and Bevill (1997) noted that peer coaching “can serve to guide the collaborative consultation process to bridge gaps in knowledge and skill among both professional and paraprofessionals” (p. 12). Likewise, Harlin (2000) stated that peer coaching is a tool that can be used as “a means of developing collegial relationships as well as providing relevant, timely, and specific feedback to the novice teacher” (p. 2). The Collaborative Coaching and Learning model of Boston is defined as one that aims to “reduce isolation and to encourage a culture in which teachers visit each other’s classrooms to observe, participate in, and share best practices” (Neufeld & Roper, 2002, p. 3). In a study of coaching and pre-service teacher behavior, Peterson and Hudson (1989) stated that, “Coaching involves the formation of small teacher support groups and peer observation” (p. 56). Their study did not provide a theoretical framework for social interaction, but reported that the results of teacher collaboration were positive.

The coaching strategy (pre-conference – observation – post-conference) seems to be a viable intervention for improving the teaching behaviors of student teachers . . . Another valuable component of this coaching and supervision process was the provision of a weekly support group. Participants in this study informally reported that the support group was beneficial. The meetings provided a forum for sharing experiences and solving problems. This support seemed to enhance and facilitate the continuation of professional growth. (p. 59)

While most, if not all, coaching programs emphasize collaboration and social interaction, it is rare that researchers present a theoretical framework for these strategies. Still, it seems reasonably certain that coaching, and peer coaching in particular, are grounded to some degree in Vygotsky’s ideas; that is, language, culture, context, and interpersonal interactions, which are at the heart of peer coaching, are critical to cognitive development.

## **Adult Development Theories**

A number of studies related to the coaching enterprise suggested that coaches are able to facilitate adult learning by guiding them through personal and social developmental stages. While references to underlying theoretical constructs were few, it was nevertheless implied in a number of studies that improved performance could be achieved through developmental coaching. That is, developmental theory posits that both children and adults move through a series of stages and that some type of force exists to propel a person through these stages. According to some researchers and writers, coaching serves as that propelling force.

Robert Kegan, a noted constructive-developmental theorist, proposed that “mental development, unlike physical development, does not have to end at age twenty: . . . we can keep growing and developing in adulthood” (Kegan & Lahey, 2001, p. 1). Like other developmentalists, including Piaget, Kohlberg, and Gilligan, Kegan (1994) argued that development occurs in stages. While Piaget was concerned mostly with child development and Kohlberg and Gilligan addressed moral development, the focus of Kegan’s work has been adult development. His stages, or Orders,

involve five ways of constructing reality . . . each represents a qualitative shift in meaning making and complexity from the Order preceding it. In moving from one Order to the next, we do not give up what we've already learned; we transform our relationship to it, moving it from the lens through which we see to one among several possible alternatives to be seen and acted on. (Berger & Fitzgerald, 2002, p. 35)

Furthermore, according to Berger and Fitzgerald:

Kegan distinguishes between *informational* learning, which is new knowledge added to the current form of one's mind, and *transformational* learning, or learning that changes the very form of one's mind, making it more spacious, more complex, and more able to deal with multiple demands and with uncertainty. . . . Transformation occurs when we develop the ability to step back and reflect on something that used to be hidden or taken for granted and to make decisions about it. (p. 29)

This happens by examining one's thoughts, one's actions, one's assumptions, and one's "immunities to change," such that "someone changes not just the ways he behaves, not just the way he feels, but the way he knows – not just what he knows but the way he knows" (Kegan, 1994, p. 17).

Based on the literature in the field, there do not appear to be many coaching programs based clearly on a developmental orientation; rather, it appears they center on more practical strategies such as reflective thought and goal-setting activities. For example, one coaching program utilizes peer coaching to "systematically link classroom improvement, teacher development, and school improvement . . . Peer coaching brings together teachers, administrators, and university professors in a collegial partnership that focuses on sustained development of educators" (Laurel, Chapman, & Hoffmeyer, 1990-91, p. 79). Furthermore, the program incorporates a "professional development system to examine meaningful professional and personal growth goals" (p. 79).

Adult developmental theory was clearly the framework for a study in which a program of peer assistance for entry-year teachers was examined.

The underlying theoretical perspective for this study lies in the literature addressing developmental stages of teachers. Within this perspective, teachers move through stages of development such as those Katz (1972) outlined . . . A mentor's knowledge of these stages [survival, consolidation, renewal, maturity] and each teacher's place in the model may help determine the type of interaction that will best facilitate the mentoring process. (Stroot, et al., 1999, p. 27).

An assumption of transformative adult learning theory is that changes in one's perceptions lead to different ways of knowing and behaving. As such, the strategy of observation and conferencing employed by many coaching programs appears to be a way



of changing perceptions and instigating change. A study of the effects of peer coaching on the acquisition of direct instruction by preservice teachers utilized such a strategy for developing teachers' knowledge and performance (Morgan & Menlove, 1994). Coaches met individually with preservice teachers twice a week to review videotaped lessons. Coaching consisted of: 1) evaluating a trainee's teaching behaviors from videotapes; 2) assisting a trainee in evaluating performance from the tapes; 3) comparing evaluations of performance; and 4) establishing objectives with the trainee for improved performance. Results suggested that peer coaching did improve teaching behaviors of pre-service teachers, and both coaches and trainees were positive about the experience. They also noted that, "videotape feedback was found to be one instrumental component in increasing effective teaching behaviors" (p. 9).

Phillips and Glickman (1991) conducted a study to stimulate teachers' cognitive development and conceptual levels of thought development. Their work utilized the Conceptual Systems Theory (CST) that "provides a framework for studying progressive stages of cognitive development" (p. 21). The program consisted of two parts: one involved learning the peer coaching process and the other involved teachers actually participating in four cycles of peer coaching. Results indicated that teachers benefited from the coaching program in a number of ways. Most importantly, there was some evidence to suggest that teachers functioned at higher conceptual levels after receiving coaching:

There is ample research to show that teachers who think at high conceptual levels can diagnose instructional problems more effectively, think of more ideas when planning, project the consequences of their actions, use a variety of teaching approaches, and have higher quality communication with their students. (p. 24)

## **Organizational Management Theories**

There is a body of literature suggesting that coaching can improve the efficiency and productivity of an organization or system. In fact, for many coaching approaches this is the ultimate goal of the coaching program. We use this broad name, organizational theory, to cover the many theories and ideas pertaining to understanding and affecting how organizations function as entities. Under this heading we include classical organizational theory with its *formal* and *informal* organizations; Theory X and Theory Y with differing assumptions about human nature; social systems theory with emphasis on interdependence among components; role theory with its emphasis on individual behavior within an organization; and contingency theory with its emphasis on situational contingencies to determine appropriate actions. The literature on organizational theories is immense, and we are able to provide only a brief summary here. However, the common element of all of these ideas is an emphasis on understanding and affecting the entire organization.

A systems model of human behavior assumes that people do not develop in isolation; rather, they develop in a variety of contexts including family, community, professional, and institutional environments. Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1950) is credited

with outlining a general systems theory for understanding organizational behavior in both the physical and social sciences. The following passage summarizes his focus on the interdependence of structures and functions to form a conceptual whole.

An organization is an integrated system of interdependent structures and functions. An organization is constituted of groups and a group consists of persons who must work in harmony. Each person must know what the others are doing. Each one must be capable of receiving messages and must be sufficiently disciplined to obey. (Berrien, 1976, p. 43)

Many of these theories and much of the literature in this area are taken from business models. These theories were developed throughout the Twentieth Century in an effort to improve American business productivity. In general, a systems model of human behavior proposes that to understand or change an organization or institution, one must consider not only the separate entities of the organization but also the relationship between and among those entities. In business, for example, increased productivity can result from changing the relationships between management and labor, or from clarifying and restructuring the organization for greater efficiency. Understanding the interaction of the various components affecting productivity becomes important for making meaningful changes. The variety of theories mentioned under this heading each provide a unique perspective to understanding organizations, while at the same time having the common focus of explaining, at least in part, organizational behavior.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) also proposed a theoretical perspective of human development that considers a broader system. It is described as a perspective that takes into account the developing person, the environment, and “especially the evolving interaction of the two” (p. 3). The following example illustrates Bronfenbrenner’s concept of ecological environment.

The ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls. At the innermost level is the immediate setting containing the developing person. This can be the home, the classroom, or . . . the laboratory . . . The next step, however, already leads us off the beaten track for it requires looking beyond single settings to the relations between them. I shall argue that such interconnections can be as decisive for development as events taking place within a given setting. A child’s ability to learn to read in the primary grades may depend no less on how he is taught than on the existence and nature of ties between the school and the home. The third level of the ecological environment takes us yet farther afield and evokes a hypothesis that the person’s development is profoundly affected by events occurring in setting in which the person is not even present. (p. 3)

In theory, the same perspectives can apply to understanding a school organization. In a school system, for example, change and growth depends not only on the teachers and the administrators, but also on the relationship between teachers, administrators, central

office, parents, community members, students, and on the culture of the institution. In this context, coaching is understood to be a comprehensive strategy for impacting the entire organization.

Showers (1985) was among the first to suggest that school systems might benefit from the adoption of a coaching program. While acknowledging that there was limited data demonstrating a positive effect, anecdotal and interview feedback suggested the following:

The effects of coaching are much more far reaching than the mastery and integration of new knowledge and skills by individual teachers. The development of school norms that support continuous study and improvement of teaching apparently build capability for other kinds of change, whether it is adoption of a new curriculum, a school-wide discipline policy, or the building of teaching repertoires. By building permanent structures for collegial relationships, schools organize themselves for improvement in multiple areas. (p. 46)

A prime example of the influence of these theories on educators is found in Owens' (2001) widely used textbook, *Organizational Behavior in Education: Instructional Leadership and School Reform*, now in its seventh edition. Owens stressed two basic concepts underlying social systems theory—subsystems and multiple causation. School districts, for example, are comprised of several subsystems: schools, classrooms, administrators, teachers, students, and curriculum. Although it may be relatively simple to attribute problems to one specific subsystem such as the curriculum, systems theory would propose that the problem stems from the interrelatedness of the various subsystems. Instead of the problem resting solely with a dated curriculum, for example, the problem may be in how teachers try to adapt a dated curriculum to meet their needs. Thus, both the curriculum and the instruction contribute to the problem. Furthermore, schools as social systems must balance the demands of both the organization and of the individuals in that organization. "There is a dynamic interrelationship in the work group, then, not only of an interpersonal nature but also between institutional requirements and the idiosyncratic needs of individual participants. . . . Organizational behavior can be viewed as the product of this interaction" (p. 86).

The education literature is replete with references to "systemic change" and similar terminology, indicating that these theories have had some influence within the profession. Yet, the degree to which coaching programs reference or articulate specific theories appears to be minimal. Still, there are some examples of research and programs that suggest a systems theory orientation. In one study of a peer coaching program designed to provide support to teachers, it was stated that "the coaching conference and the communication techniques in peer coaching act as continuing self-help relationships that serve individual, school, and district initiatives for educational improvement" (Laurel, Chapman, & Hoffmeyer, 1990-91, p. 80). The authors suggested that, "system-wide initiatives in peer coaching can introduce new knowledge and skills to all teachers in the district" (p. 81). In another study, researchers explored the impact of collegial coaching and reflective dialogue in a middle school to determine how it altered the

organizational context and thereby set the stage for cultural change (Delany & Arrendondo, 1998). Their research was based on three assumptions:

1. Changes in teachers' practices may be evident when they become aware of incongruencies between their espoused theories and their theories-in-use (Argyris, 1993; Osterman, 1990; Schon, 1987).
2. Collegial coaching, dialogue, and reflection may result in teachers acquiring positive attitudes and perceptions about ongoing professional growth.
3. Cultural change may occur in the school as teachers work collaboratively utilizing collegial coaching, dialogue, and reflective practice (Osterman, 1990; Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993).

One coaching program that has placed particular emphasis on the importance of coaching for systemic change is The Change Leadership Group at Harvard University. In a paper summarizing the conceptual basis of their program, the CLG noted:

Our view is that a successful change leadership thinks and plans systemically, strategically, and proactively about district-wide changes at various levels that will result in improved teaching and learning for all students . . . the CLG change leadership team does not work alone, but rather seeks to create and support a network of team-based relationships that become the driving leadership force for systemic improvement. (Change Leadership Group, 2003, p. 1-2)

### Constructivist Influences

A set of ideas that appear to be present in one form or another in many of the programs is constructivism. As a theoretical position, constructivism postulates that knowledge is constructed based on one's unique and personal experiences. Knowledge, according to Miller (1983), "is a process rather than a state" (p. 37). Learning is a constant process of resolving existing knowledge and new experiences through which each person generates his or her own mental models. Because constructivism embraces several theories it is sometimes regarded as a meta-theory. For example, constructivists often recognize the importance of language and the exchange of ideas (collaborative theory), and of reflection, metacognition, and cognitive structures (information processing). Thus, it is not a "pure" strand in the context of examining coaching programs, but rather a strand that encompasses several of the other theories.

Constructivist theory has roots in the work of Piaget, who, according to Sutherland (1992) was "a pioneer constructivist – in the sense that he believed a child constructed his own schemata [constructs] from his own experience in his own environment" (p. 81). Differences appear regarding the concept of *stage development*. Developmental psychologists agree that children and adults move through identifiable cognitive and moral stages, while constructivists view cognitive development as a "much more gradual process of modifying existing concepts rather than as one involving radical breakthroughs" (p. 81).

Jerome Bruner (1986) is among those who have embraced aspects of constructivism because of the emphasis placed on learning as an active process. He has noted that mental models (Piaget's schemata) provide meaning and organization to the learner, and suggested that the job of a teacher is to facilitate the acquisition of concepts in a format that is appropriate and relevant to the student. To do this, the teacher must be aware of each learner's mental models and conceptual level of understanding so that lessons are focused and meaningful.

Several links exist between constructivism and coaching. Much of the literature on coaching, for example, documents the importance of collaboration and dialogue between student and teacher. In the case of coaching, this relationship exists between teacher and coach, and changes in belief and practice are dependent in large part on this relationship. Dialogue is an essential part of most coaching programs, typically in the form of pre- and post-observation conferences, and these dialogues are fundamentally important in expanding a teacher's thinking. As with teacher and student, it is important for the coach to focus instruction on the teacher's current level of understanding.

In addition to collaboration and language, constructivist theory stresses learning as an active process where the student is constantly engaged, reviewing and renewing his or her understanding of concepts. Coaching, too, is understood by many to be a learning process whereby teachers incorporate new information and new skills with existing knowledge in a "construction" of more productive thoughts and actions.

The link between constructivist theory and coaching was noted in a study exploring the potential of collegial coaching and reflective dialogue in altering organizational context to facilitate cultural change (Delany & Arredondo, 1998).

Participants in this study used a specific format for collegial coaching in which dialogue patterns are used to facilitate both written and oral reflection about teaching practices. This format for collegial coaching is part of a constructivist supervisory model that includes strategies for engaging in reflective conversations that both support and challenge collegial thinking, dialogue skills such as pausing, paraphrasing, and probing, and development of knowledge about the ways in which intraschool dialogue reflects, maintains, and can be used to change school cultures. (p. 4)

In another program, peer coaching is based on the premise that "changing teaching behavior is a function of social interaction" (Kurth, 1994, p. 5). In their article describing a model of peer coaching, the authors stated:

The strength of this peer coaching model lies in its functionality across educational innovations. Although change in the classroom is rooted in the commitment of individual teachers, peer feedback during change helps educators reframe ideas and beliefs. Reframing demonstrates Vygotsky's (1978) premise that learning requires decontextualizing experience through social interaction.

Thus, change is collaborative as well as individual. (Weasmer & Woods, 1999, p. 33)

In explaining the constructivist roots of coaching, Caccia (1996) stated, “Coaching, then, is a partnership that hinges on two prerequisites: The person being coached must agree to be coached, and the coach must have an unswerving commitment to that person’s performance” (p. 19). He continued to document the constructivist nature of the process: “Once Mike agreed to let me coach him, we had several conversations in which I began to show him that his understanding of strong teaching was just that . . . *his understanding*, not some immutable truth” (p. 19).

The following example of a coaching program in Boston illustrates an implied connection between coaching and constructivist theory. In an effort to support whole-school improvement,

. . . the Boston Public Schools created a new kind of professional development that integrates teachers’ learning with teachers’ practice, gives participants ongoing feedback, and makes these activities a whole-school, collegial endeavor. Crucial players are the coaches. They don’t “teach” teachers. Instead, they do their work with teachers, helping them to imagine and create another reality, helping them to engage in regular, reflective discussions about instruction. (Guiney, 2001, p. 2)

In the literature on coaching there are other passing references to the influence of constructivist thought. For example, in reporting on a “generational model” of coaching for the transfer of technology skills, the authors make passing reference to the theoretical grounding of their program. “Our model grew out of a social-constructivist approach to professional development” (Caverly, Peterson, & Mandeville, 1997, p. 57). Allusions such as these are evident in a variety of programs, but the extent to which the constructivist ideas direct the actual coaching practices are often not clear.

One of the predominant constructivist related techniques that did emerge from our analysis of the coaching literature was the importance these various programs place on reflective thought. Reflective thought has strong roots in constructivism, as well as in adult development and social interaction. We include it here because of its wide usage as a specific technique in many coaching programs.

According to Dewey (1910), learning is more productive when it arises out of reflective thought, which he defined as active and careful consideration. Dewey’s ideas were clearly influential in the work of Donald Schon, who wrote extensively on “reflection-in-action” (reflection during the act of teaching) and “reflection-on-action” (perhaps the post-observation conference), and proposed that teachers could be empowered as reflective practitioners and agents of change in the school. According to Schon (1983), metacognition is a strategy that is useful to teachers in developing their abilities as change agents as they become more aware of their ways of thinking and examine their own behaviors.

A study conducted by Veenman and Denessen (2001) pointed out that “reflection is considered one of the important elements for the development of autonomy and expertise on the part of a novice teacher” (p. 387). Similarly, in a study of the effects of coaching on teacher skill and efficacy, Licklander (1995) stated:

Neither feedback, observation of a colleague, nor learning via modeling may be enough to create changes in teacher behavior. Reflection, a dialogue of thinking and doing through which the performer becomes more skillful (Schon, 1987), is important in promoting transfer of learning. Peer coaching causes teachers to reflect about performance in two ways: first, they must reflect about their own teaching to prepare for receiving feedback and engaging in dialogue about their own performance; second, they must reflect about the performance of a colleague within that colleague’s unique classroom context to prepare to give feedback and engage in dialogue about practice. When teachers prepare for a dialogue with a colleague about their own teaching, they must reflect about what they chose to do and why. They must also think about the effectiveness of their choice of behaviors and be ready to discuss the future uses of certain techniques or strategies. (p. 56)

Nolan and Hillkirk (1991) studied the effects of a reflective coaching program on veteran teachers. They defined reflective coaching as a method intended to “help teachers become more reflective and analytical, more self-directed, and more adept at identifying and implementing improvements in their instructional behavior and to help the teacher and coach acquire a better understanding of the teaching-learning process. Reflective coaching includes four major features:

- Cycles of pre-conferencing, observation, and post-conferencing for examining how classroom events affect students and what relationship the events have to the teacher’s espoused beliefs about teaching
- Shared control over the process because both partners contribute necessary expertise
- Norms of inquiry and experimentation that focus on testing hypotheses through data collected during observations
- Continuity in the coaching process over time. (p. 64)

In some cases, reflective thought was one element of a broader coaching model, while in other cases it served as the foundation for the entire program. Whichever the case, reflective thinking is a key component of many coaching programs.

## **A Final Perspective**

Apart from the theoretical models presented above, there is one additional perspective on coaching to mention, and that pertains to the degree to which the coach is directive or non-directive in their approach to the coaching task. Sometimes the degree to which a coach assumes a directive or non-directive approach is determined by the theoretical model that serves as the basis for the coaching program. In other instances, it is determined by the specific need for which the coach was hired. In either case, it is

useful to consider the directive or non-directive nature of the coaching activities to understand fully the role of coaching in a given setting or program.

On one end of the continuum (Figure 2) the coach assumes a very directive role in the coaching relationship. The coach is seen as an expert in a given area and is brought in to provide that expertise to the person or persons thought to be lacking in that area. For example, in basketball a special coach may be brought in for a period of time to instruct one or more players on how to shoot free throws correctly. In business, an executive coach might be brought in to improve the CEO's oral communication skills. In education, a teaching coach may be brought in to work with teachers on how to incorporate reading skills into the high school curriculum. The coach may be working with either an individual or with a group, but he/she is perceived as and fills the role of the expert who is there to give advice and/or impart skills through demonstration, modeling, or direct instruction.

On the other end of the spectrum are coaches who see their role in a very different light. Whether by design, philosophy, or temperament, these coaches play a much more reserved role, serving as facilitators attempting to create interactions among the adults in the schools designed to promote adult learning. When working with individuals they often employ reflection techniques and engage in in-depth discussions designed to clarify thinking, explore options, and develop understanding. When working with groups of people they often serve as a group facilitator using the same techniques. In either case, they refrain from giving advice or direction, but rather see their role as one who creates an environment where the adults can work collectively to solve their own problems and to achieve their collective goals. In this sense, they are more involved in facilitating the change process than in solving a specific problem or accomplishing a limited task.

<b>Directive Coaching</b>	<b>Non-Directive Coaching</b>
<u>The Coach</u> Outside expert Specific experience Specific abilities	<u>The Coach</u> Part of the team Broad background Varied abilities
<u>Sample Goals</u> Address a specific problem Impart a specific skill Accomplish a specific task	<u>Sample Goals</u> Adult development Environment for learning A climate for change
<u>Recipient</u> Individuals or groups	<u>Recipient</u> Individuals or groups
<u>Examples</u> Implementing a specific curriculum Teaching how to use data Designing a master schedule	<u>Examples</u> Reflective discussions Facilitating meetings Providing resources

**Figure 2. A Technical Assistance/Coaching Continuum**



We recognize that in most cases this dichotomy is a false one because some coaches will serve in both capacities in a given setting, depending on the need or circumstance (perhaps reflecting a degree of contingency theory). Still, it is often the case that one role or the other will *dominate* the actions of a given coach and reflect that coach's beliefs about the appropriate role of a person in a coaching capacity.

**Table 1. Theoretical Models for Coaching and Adult Learning**

<b>Approaches</b>	<b>Purpose of Coaching</b>	<b>Role of the Coach</b>
<b>Cognitive/Information Processing Theories</b> A learning orientation that places emphasis on helping people to understand their thought processes and to think clearly for rational decision-making.	To focus on the internal thought processes of the individual and to change the inner thinking of the learner, which will lead to overt behavior changes.	To employ various techniques, such as challenging, clarifying, and "inciting metacognition" to aid the learner to clarify and improve inner thought processes leading to behavior changes.
<b>Social Interaction/ Collaborative Learning Theories</b> Social interaction is seen as a vital component for cognitive development. Learning is understood as a reciprocal experience benefiting all involved by moving the participants to deeper levels of thinking and understanding.	To create an environment where adults can engage in collaborative conversations, thereby leading participants to deeper levels of thinking and understanding.	To facilitate collaborative conversations among peers, including the coach, that focus on collaborative dialogue, problem-solving exercises and shared experiences.
<b>Adult Development Theories</b> Adults face various personal and social developmental stages, and activities should be designed to help move the learners through these stages.	To help adult learners to move to the next level of social or cognitive levels.	To structure interactions and learning opportunities that facilitate movement through the various stages of development.
<b>Organizational Management Theories</b> Organizations are not made up of independent entities, but of relationships among entities. Comprehensive strategies must be used that impact all components of the organization.	To help participants understand the interrelationships among organizational components and to help design aligned policies and actions that lead to systemic change, that is, change throughout the entire system.	To help develop an understanding of the organization as a system of interrelated parts and to provide ways to align those parts toward improved efficiency.
<b>Constructivist Influences</b> Learning is seen as a process within the individual of creating or "constructing" mental models to fit the perceived reality.	To construct new knowledge or "schemata" leading to a more effective understanding of the world.	To challenge the perceived reality and to help create a new reality through reflection, discussion and a variety of experiences.

## Coaching in Education

### Classroom Coaching

In 1980, Joyce and Showers suggested that the outcomes of professional development programs could be strengthened and sustained in part through educational coaching. Their analysis of more than 200 studies on the effectiveness of professional development training methods indicated five components of a sound training program: 1) presentation of theory; 2) modeling or demonstration; 3) practice under simulated conditions; 4) structured and open-ended feedback; and 5) coaching for application. Joyce and Showers concluded:

The most effective training activities, then, will be those that combine theory, modeling, practice, feedback, and coaching to application. The knowledge base seems firm enough that we can predict that if those components are in fact combined in in-service programs, we can expect the outcomes to be considerable at all levels. (p. 384)

They also noted, however, that although a good many teachers would be able to successfully transfer their training to the classroom when the first four components were combined, others would require “direct coaching on how to apply the new skills and models” (p. 384).

Coaching for application, according to Joyce and Showers (1980), “involves helping teachers analyze the content to be taught and the approach to be taken, and making very specific plans to help the student adapt to the new teaching approach” (p. 384). They went on to identify four functions of the coaching process, including the provision of companionship, the provision of technical feedback, the analysis of application, and adaptation to students. They likened educational coaching to athletic coaching, noting that in both cases relationships are formed that facilitate the development of skills (Joyce & Showers, 1983). More recently, however, the sports analogy has been challenged:

Teachers are much more likely to disagree over the value, importance, and practicality of “active learning,” say, than aspiring tennis players will disagree about the virtues of developing a good backhand. What is to be coached in teaching cannot be reduced solely to matters of technical skill and competence, but involves choices of a personal, moral, and soci-political nature. (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1989, p. 20)

Educational coaching for teachers is similar in several ways to executive coaching described earlier. Intended to improve instructional performance, certain strategies such as goal-setting, feedback, and collaborative conferencing are common to both types of coaching. Although teachers have used these strategies for generations, it was not until the early 1980s that they were combined and labeled as a specific method – coaching – for improving teacher performance. Joyce and Showers (1980) suggested that coaching

was one important element in an effective professional development agenda. The purposes of coaching included companionship, support, and feedback, and initially, external staff development specialists were used to provide coaching services to schools and teachers. Later, teachers were trained as *peer coaches*, serving as internal coaches to each other. To this day, most of the literature and research in the area of coaching is specifically related to peer coaching (Ackland, 1991; Gersten, Morvant, & Brengelman, 1995; Hasbrouck, 1997; Hudson, Miller, Salzberg, & Morgan, 1994; Valencia & Killion, 1988). The following characteristics can be used to summarize peer, or *reciprocal* coaching:

- Relationships are collaborative and non-judgmental
- Power is shared
- A sense of mutuality exists in shared goals
- The approach is bottom-up, resulting in genuine, naturally-emerging coaching

Peer coaching can be contrasted to *expert coaching*, where a person or persons with more power, experience, or both, is responsible for facilitating the coaching process. In this case:

- There are collaborative relationships but power is not equally distributed
- There is a clear delineation of the expert/mentor role
- A top-down approach is taken where coaching is “forced” on an employee

Numerous variations of peer and expert coaching for teachers are found in the education literature, including *technical coaching*, *coaching for application*, *collegial coaching*, *challenge coaching*, *consultation coaching*, *reciprocal coaching*, and *mentoring*. Each provides a somewhat different perspective on the goal or circumstance of the coaching activity, but all are focused on the classroom and instructional improvement.

An example of this type of coaching is the Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) program in the Boston Public Schools. The CCL is a structured process intended to support teachers as they improve instruction by deepening their content knowledge and instructional abilities. For several years, Boston schools received both change coaching and literacy coaching, and in 2001-2002 the Boston Public Schools piloted the Collaborative Coaching and Learning program in 26 schools that had been identified as Effective Practice (EP) schools. Coaches and teachers use contracted professional development time to learn about, practice, and reflect on literacy instruction using Readers’ or Writers’ Workshops. Midway through the year it was announced that the CCL program would be used in all schools across the district, with a staggered implementation timeline. All teachers are expected to participate in a CCL cycle over time, and selection is determined by the principal/headmaster and the Instructional Learning Team (ILT). Change coaches, now referred to as “capacity” or “lead” coaches, work with schools to develop their Instructional Leadership Teams, to learn how to examine student work, and to develop teacher leadership.

The CCL model of coaching is guided by specific beliefs about adult learning, with clear constructivist and social interaction influences. Teachers, the school leader, and the coach engage in a collaborative and collegial process of inquiry about how students learn and the effective instructional practices that support student learning.

### **Leadership and Change Coaching**

In more recent years, the dissatisfaction with America's schools has led to demands for systemic change throughout the K-12 systems, including changes in district functioning and school-wide practices, as well as in the classroom. There is a prevalent view that many of today's educational leaders are not prepared to lead such changes and that outside assistance is needed. Consequently, in the last decade there have been increasing references to *change coaching* for school leaders, and more specifically related to coaching that supports school reform. This coaching can and does take the form of individual coaching for principals, superintendents and other leaders, as well as coaching to work with the entire school.

Giglio and Diamante (1998) provided a rationale for executive coaching in a business setting that could be modified to reflect the rationale for a school district or for a single school.

The resilient executive [superintendent] is able to manage and balance the contrasting external and internal demands and adjust elements to keep the system in equilibrium. The successful organization [school district] of the future will have executives [superintendents] that have been coached on how to be resilient. This resiliency will afford the executive [superintendent] an opportunity to analyze the many systems in the organization and make well informed decisions in order to move the firm [schools] forward. (p. 93)

From this perspective coaching is seen as a way to develop leaders with the needed skills to not only run organizations effectively, but also to “move the firm [schools] forward” during a period of change. For example, the Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) at the University of Washington has as its stated purpose:

The Center exists to support leaders who embrace a mission of social justice and equity for all students - those leaders who are committed to the elimination of the achievement gap by changing the policies, practices and structures in schools and school systems that perpetuate inequities so often based on race, poverty and class. (Center for Educational Leadership, n.d.)

The CEL focuses on training principals and district leaders, which includes on-site coaching. Such training and partnerships center on deepening school leaders' commitment and will to change, and on strengthening instructional leadership skills.

While some coaching efforts have focused on the leaders of the schools and districts, other coaches have attempted to work with a broader constituency within the

organization, not limiting themselves to working just with the administrators. “Change coaches help schools examine their resources – time, money, and personnel – and allocate them more effectively. They develop the leadership skills of both teachers and principals” (Neufeld & Roper, 2003, p. 4). Neufeld and Roper noted that in some instances the term change coach has been dropped in favor of *capacity coaching*, which better represents the goal of developing whole-school capacity rather than just change. These efforts would include helping school leaders focus on whole-school improvement, and also *content coaching* to facilitate the improvement of disciplined-based instruction.

The goal of reform-oriented coaching is:

To facilitate the change process, to provide resources, and to guide schools while helping to build the capacity of school faculty to do this work on their own. . . . The coach provides knowledge and access to outside expertise as well as a balanced outside perspective. The coach can maintain a healthy distance from the challenges and tensions that exist for teachers and administrators. (Center for Collaborative Education, n.d., p. 1)

The Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC) in San Francisco is such an organization designed to provide direction and support at three levels: the district, the school, and the classroom. A particular emphasis of this organization is to facilitate the development of a coherent and well-aligned reform program from the School Board to the classroom. This is attempted through a top-down/bottom-up coaching model. As such, coaches work with superintendents and their curriculum departments as well as with site principals and their leadership teams. Coaches assist with problem identification and needs analysis, goal setting, instructional design plans based on research-based best practices, and development of plans for assessment and continuous improvement.

BASRC has defined three types of coaching. Intervention coaches assist under-performing schools; executive coaches assist superintendents with school improvement efforts; and school coaches work with principals, teacher-leaders, and district office personnel in implementing strategies to improve instruction. In this model, the role of the coach is to help build capacity and not to act as an additional staff member. Their task is not necessarily to act in response to the needs and wants of a school, but to provide a research- and experience-based framework to direct a school’s reform work.

The National School Reform Faculty (NSRF) at the Harmony School of Education in Bloomington, Indiana has had a significant influence in the field of coaching over the last several years. NSRF has brought together in one organization the most common strands seen among school coaching groups. The program is a strong reflection of constructivist and social interaction/collaborative learning theories, offers services for all levels of the organization, and employs, in general, non-directive and collegial coaching strategies. These characteristics are reflected in the program description found on the NSRF website.

The program:

- provides a structure for school people to work together in “critical friendship,” looking closely at one another's practice and helping to improve and adapt it;
- trains a facilitator/coach chosen by the local participants to help them learn to work together most effectively;
- begins with work on individual practice, then builds toward an understanding of whole-school/district culture and organization;
- provides on-going consultation and support for leaders;
- offers advanced learning opportunities for facilitators/coaches, school and district leaders, and school faculty;
- works with national school reform networks whose members use NSRF to accelerate their whole-school change efforts. (NSRF, n.d.)

A primary focus of the NSRF program is to help educators create learning communities through collaboration designed to deepen knowledge of subject matter and to critically examine whole-school change that supports improved classroom practice. “NSRF staff works intensively with schools and districts as they establish the habits and practices of a learning community and provides ongoing opportunities to sustain and extend those habits” (NSRF, n.d.). Critical Friends Groups are an integral component of the activities seen in schools associated with NSRF. In addition, coaches model various group facilitation techniques with the goal of building capacity within existing leadership to eventually fill that role in the organization. Throughout the process the coaches ask questions and employ reflection techniques to stimulate learning in the community.

The NSRF has developed working relationships with a number of organizations, including the Small Schools Coaches Collaborative at the University of Washington, the Cleveland Municipal School District, The Rural Trust, and the Education Commission of the States. In addition, NSRF conducts national coaching seminars that train coaches from a large number of organizations, furthering the influence of this coaching model.

### **Characteristics of Coaches**

Once again, the literature in business contains more information about the type of person that makes a successful coach than can be found in educational writings. There is general consistency about the characteristics of effective coaches, although this is dependent to a certain degree on the nature of the coaching model. According to Greco (2001), from a business perspective it is important that coaches are able to:

Ask powerful questions, express active listening, and design and create action plans and action behaviors. At a more advanced level they must also be willing to take risks in challenging individuals at a high level, to inspire others, and to articulate adult developmental theory. Finally they must have proficiency in the business world and to understand the dynamics of organizations. (p. 30)

In discussing coaching as a means of leveraging change in business leaders, Giglio and Diamante (1998) identified several characteristics as being critical to the

coaching process. These include the ability to establish honest and trusting relationships, being able to provide objective feedback, and understanding the need for clients to identify their own problems. Similarly, Burdett (1998) stated that, “the essential tools the coach has to work with are: trust, mutual respect, a sense of common purpose, integrity, openness, and honesty” (p. 143).

It can and has been argued that coaching as an educational enterprise requires many of the same skills. As with business coaches, it is critical that school coaches have the personal qualities that allow them to build trust and establish productive working relationships. As noted by The Center for Collaborative Education (n.d.),

The initial goal of a coach should be to establish credibility within the school and to build trust and strong individual relationships with staff. This is a process that cannot be rushed and is an essential part to the coach becoming a trusted team member. (p. 2)

It has also been proposed that coaching “is not work for the faint-hearted. To do it well requires a calm disposition and the trust-building skills of a mediator” (Guiney, 2001, p. 742). Clearly, it is important for *expert coaches* to be knowledgeable about the areas in which they are expected to provide service, whether it is in a specific subject (reading or science, for example) or in a strategy such as classroom management. As Ackland (1991) stated in his review of peer coaching models, “Expert coaches must be specially trained teachers with an acknowledged expertise who observe other teachers to give them support, feedback, and suggestions” (p. 24).

Research also suggests that effective coaches have strong communication skills, particularly the ability to speak and to respond in non-judgmental ways. In a discussion of effective coaching by the Center for Collaborative Education, the authors stated,

[The coach] must serve as a model for effective communication and constantly explore ways to improve communication school wide. The coach must clearly articulate goals, plans, and processes, and be skilled in clarifying ideas, summarizing discussions, and keeping conversations focused on the outcomes set by the group. . . . It is important to instill the habit of reflective writing, keeping records of goals and long term plans. Often written documents that capture ideas, goals, or simply a record of significant meeting items, can provide the impetus for a shift in people’s thinking. A written piece can transform a difficult situation by outlining a complex problem on paper and allowing a faculty to more easily reflect on the issue. (Center for Collaborative Education, n.d., p. 4)

There is discussion in the literature regarding the need for coaches to be knowledgeable of educational issues, including “vocabulary, strategies, skills, and principles related to both general and specific teaching activities” (Strother, 1989, p. 826). In other words, effective coaches have both a historical and current understanding of educational practice. Likewise, it is important that coaches be able to maintain objectivity in the work they do. In addition, some have suggested that coaches need to

have at least some expertise in observation strategies since much of the instructional coaching involves classroom observations.

Finally, it appears that effective coaching is determined to a large degree by a coach's skill in facilitating reflective thinking on the part of those being coached. This includes active and empathetic listening as well as introducing metacognitive strategies into the coaching process (Center for Collaborative Education, n.d.). Specifically, CCE suggested,

One way a coach serves as a catalyst for change is by empowering teachers to be *reflective practitioners* (Schon, 1983) and agents of change. . . . Introducing metacognition is a strategy that allows teachers to become conscious of their ways of thinking and may allow them to examine their own behaviors. Thus, it has the potential for significant impact on teaching. (Center for Collaborative Education, n.d., p. 3).

Effective coaches, then, must be able to establish their credibility by forming honest and trusting relationships with their clients. They must be able to communicate effectively both verbally and in written form, and they should be well-informed on all matters of education, including school policy, instructional strategies, curriculum, and special populations. Furthermore, effective coaches have the ability to listen actively and empathetically, and they are skilled at facilitating reflective thinking among teachers. Finally, coaches should have some expertise in classroom observation techniques. Without such traits and skills, it is doubtful that the coach will contribute meaningfully to the change process.

## Summary

In the broadest sense, *coaching* is a term used to describe a number of related strategies for improving performance, whether it be sports performance (the football coach), business performance (the executive coach) or teaching performance (the peer and expert coach). Depending on situational needs, coaching may be directed at improving the performance of individuals or of larger organizations, and may be provided for remediation; for enriching sound, established people and programs; or for building capacity to respond to social and environmental changes. As a process, coaches are concerned with the development of the person receiving the coaching, but it is important that this activity be differentiated with other processes designed to change individuals and their behavior. Most coaching programs are careful not to cross over into the domain of counseling and psychotherapy and set limits to the type and degree of deeply personal communication activities allowable.

Like so many other areas of education, various business models appear to serve as the bases for coaching practices in education. During our examination of the literature we were able to locate numerous references to coaching in a variety of articles, the majority of which were “how to” and “the need for” type of articles. We were able to find only a few articles in which a clear theoretical model of coaching was explained, and only a



limited number of empirical research studies. Overall, in both business and education, and particularly in education, the literature reveals relatively weak theoretical foundations to the practices and often little attention to the ideas underlying the whole practice of coaching. In the descriptions of coaching practices, few authors articulate a theoretical model they are following in their practices. Consequently, in many instances we were left with the task of identifying a theoretical model, if any, *implied* by the coaching practices advocated. Oftentimes the coaching appeared to be based on an eclectic or “common sense” approach based on an individual’s own experience in a given setting. In the development of these models, program developers have relied on a variety of theories from organizational development, developmental psychology, cognitive psychology, and systems theories, just to name a few.

From the coaching literature we identified four major theoretical positions or categories that serve as a framework for discussing coaching goals and practices. These include cognitive/information processing theory, social interaction learning theory, adult development theory, and organizational theory. The first three of these focus primarily on how individuals learn, while the last one focuses primarily on the collective workings of the organization. In addition, we also found that coaching programs are greatly influenced by constructivist approaches to learning. Constructivism has become such a broad term that it encompasses several of the other theories, and its influence can be seen in each of the first three models. In fact, there is considerable overlap among the models, and we saw components of at least two or more of these models in many programs we examined.

The degree to which a coach is directive or non-directive in the coaching process is also a useful perspective when examining the role a coach plays in an organization. This functioning is determined in part by the theoretical underpinnings directing the coach, and in part by the skills and temperament of the individual coach. This is seldom an “either/or” set of actions, and some coaches will serve in both capacities in a given setting, depending on the need or circumstance. Still, in most cases, one role or the other will *predominate* the actions of a given coach and reflect that coach’s beliefs about the appropriate role of a person in a coaching capacity.

The earliest forms of coaching in education began as coaching for teachers to improve instructional practices, and that is still the most common type of coaching program. However, in recent years “change coaches” or “capacity coaches” have become common as attempts to change or reinvent the entire organization have increased. In both instances “peer coaching” or “expert coaching” is being used, depending on the philosophy of the coaching organization or the need of the group or individual receiving the coaching. In either role, effective coaches must be knowledgeable about all matters in education including school policy, instructional strategies and curriculum; be able to establish honest and trusting relationships with their clients; and be able to communicate effectively both verbally and in written form.

## PART II: CASE STUDIES

### CHANGE LEADERSHIP GROUP

The Change Leadership Group (CLG) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education offers programs that focus on systemic approaches to school improvement to help alleviate the “persistent inequities” that exist in how students are educated. The CLG exists primarily to facilitate the transformation of high schools, although its work is of such a nature that, when successful, the entire K-12 system is affected. From 2002-2004, the Change Leadership Group offered two program components for schools held in residence at Harvard University. The first was a Three-Day Learning Lab designed to create an awareness of the change process and to encourage participants to *think systemically*. The second component was a much more thorough two-year program for district leadership teams. CLG engages in ongoing program evaluation and as a result they are continually modifying their programs. We limit our discussions to the underlying theories directing the Three-Day Learning Lab and Change Leadership Program (CLP) in place at the time of this study.

Funded by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the CLG has as its mission:

- To continuously develop new knowledge about what is needed to initiate and sustain deep systemic changes in K-12 public education that results in improved learning for all students
- To sponsor programs that strengthen the capacities of educational leaders and change coaches to implement systemic change
- To disseminate key learnings from this work to diverse professional audiences

In addition, there are shared beliefs that guide the work of the organization:

That fundamental changes in the world, in the nature of work, in the understanding of how people learn and in what must be learned, in expectations for citizenship, and in the societal influences on children and families together present new and urgent challenges to public education in America.

That, in response to these changes and increased demands for accountability, communities are called upon to re-think the basic goals of education, as well as approaches to teaching, curriculum, and assessment, with a strong commitment to improving the quality of education for all students; that these tasks represent new and difficult challenges for educators – and especially for change leaders – requiring new forms of support.

That the process of learning and the development of understanding require the active engagement of learners of all ages, children and adults; that adults in the community (educators, parents, and community members) need opportunities for active learning in order to understand and respond meaningfully to the new challenges for educating in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. (Change Leadership Group, n.d.)

A key element in the CLG is developing the understanding of the relationship between human development and organizational growth. Such a foundation is often missing in school change initiatives, which tend to be “top-down” or highly centralized. Thus, the deeper dimensions of the change process are ignored. The conceptual framework of the Change Leadership Program (described in more detail below) intentionally focuses on these deeper dimensions to help organizations grow along three critical continua. Specifically, leadership for change helps schools and districts move from a culture of compliance to a culture of commitment; from an environment of isolation to one of collaboration; and from a “piecemeal” approach to change to a “whole-system” approach.

A Change Leadership Team, assisted by the CLG, learns to take responsibility for both problems and solutions. The role of a district leadership team is to build the capacity of the larger organization to respond to change by understanding the beliefs, values, and assumptions that influence behavior, and then to create opportunities to move forward with the change process. Heavy emphasis is placed on collaboration, relational accountability, and transformative adult learning; helping people learn to assume new responsibilities, to work more collaboratively, and to reflect on the purposes of change by reconsidering familiar assumptions and practices. Rather than relying on outside influence and strategies to “fix things,” the Change Leadership Program focuses on helping the people in an organization understand themselves and the necessity of change, encouraging them come together to work for improved student learning. In one sense, CLG personnel serve as external coaches for the purpose of developing internal coaches in a district.

## **The CLG Framework for Change**

The Change Leadership Group has designed an “ecological model” described as follows:

The CLG change leadership team balances a knowledge of a theory of change and what is required to improve teaching with an understanding of and constant attention to the needs of adult learners and a commitment to expanding the realm of collaboration and inquiry, much like a “constructivist” classroom teacher. The CLG change leadership team supports change by understanding the belief systems, underlying values, and implicit assumptions that drive behavior in the district and then creating the experiences and opportunities for reflection that build sustainable cultural change. (Change Leadership Group, 2003b, p. 2)

The coaching and training relies heavily on the work of Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey, both of whom have expertise in developmental psychology and adult learning. In fact, the theoretical and philosophical bases for the CLG are the most elaborate and clearly articulated of all of the coaching programs we examined. They describe it as a “new technology for personal learning,” based on the idea of “transformative languages” (Kegan & Lahey, 2001, p. 6). “The forms of speaking we have available to us regulate the forms of thinking, feeling, and meaning making to which we have access” (p. 7). How we talk and think influences our actions and the actions of others, and until leaders understand certain languages, such as the language of commitment and the language of personal responsibility, systemic change will be extremely difficult. Kegan and Lahey’s ideas are extensive and much more detailed than we can describe here, but it is important to note that the CLG is concerned with addressing the communication barriers and individual and group thinking patterns that inhibit or prevent organizational change. The CLG training described below focuses on creating leaders who understand and can use these concepts in their organizations. Some early results from district personnel who have participated in this training are summarized in this report.

At the heart of the work are the following assumptions:

1. The primary purpose for change is to improve student learning.
2. For change to be successful there must be ownership, urgency, and an understanding of the context, conditions, competencies, and culture in which the change must take place.
3. Change must take into account adult assumptions, commitments, behavior, and cognitive development.
4. Change can best be accomplished by a team that includes the superintendent rather than by a single coach.
5. Collaboration is critical to the change process.
6. Leadership for change must think and plan systemically, strategically, and proactively.

Because of the underlying philosophy about leadership and systemic change, CLG expects participants to have a change leadership *team* that is led by the superintendent. One or more designated change coaches, either internal employees on special assignment and/or external consultant/coaches support the team and are responsible for keeping the work focused and moving forward. In addition, the coaches track commitments and ensure follow-through with deadlines and tasks. The broader change leadership team consists of representatives from various constituent groups including the teacher’s union, teacher leaders, central office and curriculum personnel, and possibly parent and community groups. This team helps the broader education community understand the nature of school change, identify district-wide goals for change, and agree on strategies to reach those goals. CLG expects that the team will work together in facilitating the change process over a number of years, focusing on individual, cultural, and structural changes.

The Change Leadership Group recognizes that coaching requires unique knowledge and skills. Internal coaches are expected to have skill in “upward coaching” (an *employee* coaching a boss), the ability to work with and be respected by all shareholder groups, and the capacity to maintain an independent, objective stance in exercising good judgment as to how and when to make one’s view known. With the larger change leadership team, the coach must be able to model good teaching in meetings. The coach must also be skilled at asking appropriate and relevant questions to create and maintain focus, to ensure that conversations and actions “wrap around the district’s theory of action, and to consistently promote inquiry and reflection.” Furthermore, the coach must be aware of the “content” of change by understanding and using relevant data.

The Change Leadership Group believes that internal and external coaches benefit from additional competencies as well.

1. To recognize and understand how changes in the world impact student learning and their ability to work and be productive citizens
2. To think systemically and to differentiate between goals, strategies, and tactics
3. To keep others focused on the larger goal of improving instruction
4. To facilitate meetings where all voices are heard
5. To identify necessary resources
6. To be aware of the reinvention efforts of other districts
7. To think critically and problem-solve, offering insight and understanding contradictions
8. To understand when to give advice and when to facilitate “discovery”
9. To move easily from the trenches to the balcony

## Training Programs

### The Three-day Learning Lab—*Systemic Change for Student Success*

The focus of The Learning Lab was to create an awareness of the need for change, and consisted of seven components listed below along with a brief content summary.

1. Why Change – Understanding the problem in context. The context and the need for school reinvention are clarified. School improvement is not approached by finding fault with teachers, parents, or kids, but rather by recognizing the necessity of adapting to a very different society.
2. Improving Instruction: At the core of a CLG change process. Because sound instruction is at the heart of any school improvement initiative, the entire lab is centered on change with a goal of strengthening learning for all students. Seven disciplines for strengthening instruction are presented: 1) understanding and urgency; 2) widely shared vision of good teaching; 3) all adult meetings are about instruction; 4) well-defined standards and performance assessment for student work; 5) supervision is frequent, rigorous, and entirely focused on

the improvement of instruction; 6) professional development is primarily on-site, intensive, collaborative, and job-embedded; and 7) data is used diagnostically at frequent intervals.

3. The 4 Cs: A tool for a more systemic understanding of the problem. To take a systemic approach to school reinvention, leaders must identify and understand the problems that exist and that inhibit sound instruction. Thus, considerable time is devoted to developing an understanding of not just the context, but also of the *conditions*, the *culture*, and the *competencies* that support or detract from effective teaching and learning.
4. The Three Continua: The means for doing sustainable and adaptive change work. Participants learn to recognize common obstacles in the change process, specifically in generating and sustaining energy for school reinvention. The Change Learning Group takes an ecological approach to change, focusing on *purpose*, *engagement*, and *collaboration*. Teams are introduced to three continua to help assess and guide their change efforts:
  - Compliance -----Engagement
  - Isolation -----Collaboration
  - Reaction-----Purpose and Focus
5. The Three Phases: The sequence of adaptive change work. Before asking people to make dramatic changes in their behavior, a strong and supportive foundation is necessary. Ownership is critical to the process. The Change Leadership Program has identified 3 phases that serve as a “roadmap” for establishing a foundation on which viable and sustainable reinvention can thrive. These phases include:
  - Preparation – Laying the foundations and developing sponsorship
  - Envisioning – Developing a shared vision
  - Enacting – Enacting the vision
6. Why is it so hard for us to change? The change process requires adults to engage in a different kind of learning across the organization. To do the deep and thoughtful work of school reinvention, educators must examine their own assumptions, commitments, and “immunities to change.”
7. Critical reflections on next steps. Through collaborative and guided reflection, individual participants and teams are encouraged to share their perceptions of the change process, the strengths and needs of their district, and the direct steps they will take to move ahead in the reinvention process. “Step-back” consulting allows teams to share their analyses and to receive feedback from other teams to assist them in developing a long-term plan for school improvement.

## **Two-year Program: Change Leadership Program**

The Change Leadership Program was a two-year program offered in 2002-2004 intended primarily for superintendent- or CEO-led teams committed to working for systemic change in a district or network of schools. The program “prepare[d] leadership teams to strengthen local capacity for transformational change aimed at significantly improving student learning and teacher performance” (Change Leadership Group, 2003a, p. 3). Four on-site residencies at Harvard allowed participants time to understand the context and elements of change and the interdependence between organizational learning and development. Participants learned strategies for engaging their communities in supporting and working for change. They also learned about the immunities to change and how to develop and support a collaborative learning culture. Specifically, participants were expected to leave with the following coaching skills:

- Mentoring educational leaders
- Thinking strategically and framing critical questions
- Engaging others in collaborative problem-solving
- Conducting systemic diagnosis, planning, and assessment
- Helping others understand the new role of the organization-wide change-coach
- Creating systemic focus on instructional improvement

### **Immunity to Change**

In addition to the content covered in the Learning Lab, participants in the Change Leadership Program spent considerable time understanding their own personal and professional assumptions and “immunities to change.” Harvard faculty member Robert Kegan and Associate Director Lisa Lahey shared with participants a three-stage process designed to help them understand, at an organizational level, what factors prevent change from occurring. By learning to identify and understand competing commitments and assumptions about how the world works, participants could eventually uncover their own immunities to change and move forward more effectively.

According to program literature, “The most important steps in diagnosing immunity to change are uncovering employees’ competing commitments and unearthing their big assumptions.” This was accomplished through a “four column” exercise in which each person identified his/her commitments, related behaviors, and big assumptions. An example follows.

### The Four-Column Exercise

	<b>I am committed to. . .</b>	<b>What am I doing or not doing that is keeping my commitment from being fully realized?</b>	<b>Competing commitments</b>	<b>Big assumption</b>
<b>Helen</b>	. . . the new initiative.	I don't push for top performance from my team members or myself; I accept mediocre products and thinking too often; I don't prioritize.	I am committed to not upsetting my relationship with my boss by leaving the mentee role.	I assume my boss will stop supporting me if I move toward becoming his peer; I assume that I don't have what it takes to successfully carry out a cutting-edge project.

After participants identified the big assumption, they were asked to test the assumption and to evaluate the results. This work was powerful for individuals, and they believed it could be equally powerful for teams, groups, and organizations. According to Kegan and Lahey (2001):

Although competing commitments and big assumptions tend to be deeply personal, groups are just as susceptible as individuals to the dynamics of immunity to change. Face-to-face teams, departments, and even companies as a whole can fall prey to inner contradictions that “protect” them from significant changes they may genuinely strive for. (p. 92)

### Step-Back Consulting

Another component of the Change Leadership Program was “Step-Back Consulting,” an opportunity for district teams to engage in a process of focused reflection. In the Step-Back session, teams were given “reflective space” in order to “share and receive feedback from other participants as they planned to integrate and implement their learning from the program.” It was expected that through this work, teams would “experience collaborative reflection in understanding and planning for the continued work of each coach team; develop strategic next steps for work in schools and the district; and receive critical feedback to aid in refining the action plan.”

### Change Leadership Group Organization

The Change Leadership Group is administered by two co-directors and utilizes nine coaching staff and administrators. The combined group has accumulated experience



in developmental psychology, teaching and learning, public school administration, adult learning, human development, school improvement, and school leadership. Most, if not all, members of the CLG work in schools on a regular basis, and during the 2002-2003 school year they were involved in facilitating the change process in two beta sites (West Clermont, Ohio and Grand Rapids, Michigan) and one theta site (Corning, New York). On-site work in beta and theta sites provides opportunities for the CLG to pilot change leadership strategies in working settings. The organization offers different change designs to meet the unique needs of each pilot district, but whatever the design, the focus is always on building and developing capacity rather than on merely providing consultant services.

A team of CLG administrators meets weekly to review program implementation efforts and to formulate plans for future labs, seminars, and pilot projects. The CLG appears to practice what it teaches, relying heavily on collaboration, critical reflection, and ongoing, formative program assessment. For example, in designing a training agenda for the Change Leadership Program, they believed that a two-year program would offer sufficient skills and direction for a district to move thoughtfully and successfully through the reinvention process. Experience has shown, however, that even two years is not necessarily enough time to do the intensive work of reinvention, and the group is currently considering ways to extend the training. This may take the form of context-specific, job-embedded professional development and coaching in which committed districts would work with CLG faculty in an ongoing and intensive “change” relationship.

Over the last two years, the Change Leadership Group has also modified their understanding of how coaches can best facilitate change at the district level. Rather than relying on a single coach to coordinate and direct a reinvention agenda, the CLG proposes that a change leadership team, led by the district superintendent and supported by one or more change coaches, facilitate the process. The Change Leadership Team is charged with guiding a district’s reinvention agenda by thinking and planning systemically, strategically, and proactively.

## **Change Leadership in Action**

Numerous school districts have participated in one or more activities with the Change Leadership Group, and several have had an in-depth relationship with the CLG. We visited with personnel from several of these districts to hear about the effects of the program in action. Below is a brief description of three districts’ experiences. Each of these districts has had some degree of success at systemic reform. However, they are well aware that they have only begun the process with the help of the Change Leadership Group and that considerable work remains. At the same time, these districts demonstrate the potential for systemic change in education and the role that change coaching can play.

### District #1

One large urban school district made the decision to work with the Change Leadership Group in 2002 when administrative personnel recognized the need for visionary, facilitative leaders and yet were faced with hiring and evaluation practices that focused on managerial skills. The timing was fortuitous: changes in personnel at the district level presented opportunities for modifications to both structure and process, and yet the district's commitment to their vision and goals remained solid. The CLG model appealed to administrators in this district because of the focus on leadership and because of the straightforward nature of the training. According to one district-level leader, "The whole notion of *change leadership* made sense to me. We knew we needed to better equip our principals and move to a distributed leadership model, and the CLG program appeared to be a program that would help us do that."

The district's partnership with CLG began when two members of the central office staff attended the two-year training residency at Harvard. When CLG personnel concluded that teams would be strengthened by including the Superintendent and other senior representatives from the district office, this district added their Superintendent and the executive director of a local philanthropic partner to the training sessions. This expanded group of administrators attended regular sessions at Harvard designed to acquaint members with the various components of the CLG framework: the Four Cs, the Three Continua, the Seven Disciplines, and the Four Columns. District personnel described a flexible program during which CLG personnel sought serious feedback from team members and provided opportunities for them to reflect, assess, and discuss the various training components at key points along the way. CLG took this feedback seriously, and made modifications to the program based in part on suggestions and requests from the participants.

During the training periods, district participants maintained a working relationship with the CLG coaches through both formal and informal activities and strategies. The personal coach offered phone and e-mail assistance and guidance by asking questions to move the work forward. CLG staff members also came to the district to work directly with the team. According to a member of the leadership team, one of the most useful aspects of the training was the way in which the CLG coach modeled the leadership work, in large part through posing relevant and instructive questioning techniques. Whatever the level of support, district administrators found the feedback offered by CLG coaches to be valuable. For example, two CLG coaches came to the district and observed and assisted the administrative team as they planned and carried out a potentially "sticky meeting" with a school principal. "The feedback we received was very valuable."

District team members were enthusiastic and positive about their work in the Change Leadership Program and could clearly point out several ways in which their training affected the reform efforts in the district. Most notable was the focus on the 4 Cs of Context, Culture, Conditions, and Competencies. Of these, the most important changes have been in Culture and Conditions. All district administrators we spoke to agreed that the culture of the district has changed because of collaborative conversations that are now

taking place between the Curriculum and Instruction, School Support, and School Administration structural components of the organization. One administrator commented, “The fact that these ‘silos’ are meeting is amazing. Before, there was never any interaction between the three.” Another administrator shared the following example of just how significant those changes have been:

Before our CLG training, if we needed to make changes in the way students recovered credits, it would start with a memo from the Superintendent to the District Superintendents. They would forward the memo along to the school principals, and then they would individually try to figure out *if* and *how* they might implement the directive. Now, in a similar circumstance, there would be a conversation between the Superintendent, the District Superintendents, and principals. They would dialog the strengths and limitations of various strategies for implementing the directive: “What’s the best way?” and “How are you doing it?” It’s just a much better way to handle it and the process is a good model for leaders in the district to see.

Similarly, those involved with the CLG cited the implementation of weekly meetings of the district administrative team to discuss school reform and other pressing issues as a positive outcome of the involvement with CLG. To a person, participants were positive (and even shocked) at the impact of these meetings. “The district meetings have been a major, major accomplishment. These people never interacted before. The entire culture is different.” The training has evidently had an effect beyond those who directly participated with CLG. “We didn’t formally teach everything we learned at CLG, but we have shared the Four Cs and the Seven [Disciplines] informally. Mostly we model the training we’ve received. Our discussions are more productive and we ask better questions.”

The CLG focus on instruction and the Seven Disciplines for strengthening instruction led the district to make a strong commitment to equipping teachers with necessary and relevant training at the outset of their reform work. They believe that instruction – teaching and learning – is at the heart of the school reform movement and suggest that the Seven Disciplines are well-aligned with their goals and anticipated outcomes.

This district reports making positive steps toward systemic change to enhance student achievement with the help of the CLG training. Despite significant changes in the district over the years, there is some evidence to suggest that the reform efforts are beginning to bear fruit. A number of different high school reinvention models are emerging, for example, and qualitative changes are taking place in the ways that district-level personnel interact. They admit that there is a long way to go in the process, and not all of the CLG ideas have taken hold. For example, participants we talked to agreed on the value of identifying and understanding the big assumptions and immunities to change (Four Columns/Immunities to Change), and there are times when team members discuss the ideas with each other. However, at the time of our visit they indicated that they had not used this “tool” at an organizational level yet. Given the scope and complexity of the

CLG ideas it is not surprising that the administrative team has not been able to employ all of the change strategies in just two years.

Because there is still considerable work ahead, the district recognizes they would benefit from an ongoing relationship with CLG and is hopeful of finding a way to continue the partnership beyond the last residency. The CLG team has also recognized that systemic reform does not happen in two years and are working on a plan for providing training that is both broad and deep. One district administrator concluded by saying:

Part of the reason this has been so successful for us is that we had a very clear plan in place prior to beginning our partnership with CLG. We had a vision, goals, and outcomes and there was strong commitment to this plan. . . . The presence of an outside partner is critical to this work. And so in many ways we were well-positioned to make leadership changes.

### **District #2**

A second urban school district began its association with CLG as part of a concerted effort to reverse a trend of student failure, unacceptable graduation rates, and lack of student respect. They described the process this way:

During the 1999-2000 school year, our district began looking at how we could better serve our students to prepare them with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The process we used, called Continuous Improvement, required that we make decisions that are research-based and data driven. Each of the district's schools began examining themselves to make instructional changes. During this time, community forums were held. From these town meetings emerged our district mission and six community-mandated goals.

Their involvement with the Change Leadership Group began when two members of the central office staff attended a CLG training event and became excited about the possibilities of approaching systemic change through their coaching model. Based on their enthusiasm, one team member applied for the coaching program. This was useful, but not sufficient training for the work the district needed to accomplish. Consequently, they submitted an application to become a CLG beta site. Since being accepted, the district has hosted five visits of the CLG team. Together, the district and the CLG develop agendas for their visits, and the work includes not only the Superintendent, but the Core team and the Leadership team as well. According to the Superintendent, "The CLG works with everyone, with the whole spectrum. They take a systemic approach so that we do not just create islands of excellence."

When members of the CLG team visited the district, they worked in several different capacities. For example, they facilitated activities to help the district identify "Excellence in Instruction" personnel by analyzing tapes of classroom instruction and by

leading building walk-throughs. In addition, CLG representatives typically met with Core and Leadership team members to review specific agenda items.

According to district officials, the Change Leadership Group was instrumental in soliciting community input and support, which has been an important factor in the success they have experienced. While CLG led the community forums at the outset of the reform movement, this district has since developed the capacity and the skills to engage the community independently of CLG representatives. Perhaps the most important contribution of the CLG to this district's efforts was that they forced the administrative team to stay focused. According to one district official, "The CLG was instrumental in focusing us on instruction. They told us we had too many goals and that we should keep the focus on instruction. From then on, all our decisions have been student-centered." Using data to inform decision-making has been an important part of that instructional focus.

District representatives identified several tools and strategies gained from their CLG training that have positively influenced their work. First, the Seven Disciplines for strengthening instruction have been powerful statements in guiding their work, and two in particular serve "as anchors to all our work." Observed one district team member, "It was really helpful to have the CLG work with us in understanding the Seven Disciplines. We would have 'stop points' during our sessions and we would do a quick huddle. It was real formative coaching." Another stated, "Our principal meetings are *totally* different. They are focused less on management and more on instruction now."

District personnel have also found the Three Continua and the Four Column processes to be quite useful. Several team members commented that the language of the Three Continua is valuable in understanding the change process. "At the senior level [of the district], we spent time talking about the shift from isolation to engagement and how that could affect our work. It has been very helpful." And, although the Four Column work was difficult, it was "personally important" to team members. Stated one member of the administrative team, "I've really struggled with my assumptions." Another said, "This work is transformational. . . I'm a different person because of it." Team members agreed that their relationship with the Change Leadership Group profoundly affected their reform agenda. They credited the CLG staff with being instrumental in focusing the district's efforts on instruction, on the intentional judicious use of data, and on building leadership capacity throughout the district. In addition, CLG staff were seen as knowledgeable and insightful, with the ability to ask the right questions. "The questions really move our work," remarked one administrative team member. "Any transition at the district level won't totally disrupt our work now because we have made the transformative change."

### **District #3**

The experiences of personnel from a third district were very similar. The CLG provided coaching to district administrative teams as they developed and implemented a comprehensive reform agenda to align the curriculum and to improve high school

graduation rates. The district's relationship with CLG began when the superintendent returned full of enthusiasm after attending a CLG training event. Since then, district personnel have recognized the need to approach reform "systemically" through a clear and focused change framework. "We recognized that we can't approach this as islands," according to one team member. Key to this work was the CLG's insight and ability to ask good questions. "The questions were critical . . . they kept us on the right path," observed one district administrator. Another commented, "They [the CLG] kept pushing us to think at a deeper level. They don't let us get off with easy answers."

Several examples of CLG's coaching efforts help explain the work accomplished in this district. "We went there [CLG training session at Harvard] talking about small schools. That was where we were ready to do our work. But we came back talking about the real issue . . . relationships. It was all about relationships, not structure. They helped us come to that realization." Another team member discussed a change in perspective: "We have moved from *solving issues* to *focusing on instruction* . . . from *compliance* and *operations* to *instruction*. And we at the district office recognized that we need to be more involved in changing the classroom."

In this district, the administrative team has been deliberate in sharing its work with the board, with teachers, and with the greater community. As a result, the community passed a vote to support the schools by a 2:1 margin. They have found some of the CLG language to be particularly helpful in communicating the new vision to the community. For example, "*As-is*" and "*To-be*" have been powerful ideas for presenting the new district vision and education plan, and the language is evident in many of the district's reform documents, and

## Summary and Conclusions

The Change Leadership Group employs a complex but lucid framework for systemic, sustainable change within a school district. Ultimately, their goals are improving classroom instruction and student learning. However, they seek to accomplish this not through direct coaching with classroom teachers, but rather through building capacity in a district leadership team to understand the belief systems, values, and assumptions that drive behaviors in the district. The coaches create experiences and opportunities for collaboration, relational accountability, and adult learning to help the people in the organization understand themselves and the necessity of change, and then come together to work for improved student learning.

For the most part, CLG coaches are non-directive in their approach to coaching, but their actions are directed by a clear set of ideas about why and how institutions should change. The program relies heavily on the theoretical and research work of Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey and on the extensive practical experience of Tony Wagner. From this foundation, the CLG has developed several strategies and tools to give direction to their work. The Seven Disciplines of strong instruction, the Four Cs (Context, Conditions, Competencies, and Culture), the Three Continua, the Three Phases, and the Four Column process for identifying immunities to change provide a workable structure for districts.

These tools and strategies are used to varying degrees in partner districts depending on individual circumstance and need. In addition to these tools and strategies, however, the skill of the CLG staff in providing guidance, support, and direction through questioning and modeling is critical to the coaching process. Furthermore, the requirement that the district superintendent be involved in training, the fact that CLG is “non-political” in their work, and the trusting relationship that CLG is able to create with district personnel were cited in the districts we visited as reasons for the program’s success.

When asked about the theory of adult learning or organizational change that guided their coaching practices, the CLG provided a coherent set of ideas in writing and orally to explain the role of the coach. Similarly, the CLG coaches have a clear set of ideas guiding their strategies to engage school leaders in building capacity for change within the district.

While the potential of the CLG to change systems is great, its strength may be its greatest limitation. The driving ideas are complex, have taken years to develop, and, therefore, are not easy to transfer to other people in a few seminars, or perhaps even in a few years. Developing an understanding of the ideas in others to the degree necessary for success, and finding people with the skills of the core group as the program expands will not be an easy task. The CLG is aware of these challenges. But school reform has always been difficult, and we have tried many easy “fixes” before. The ideas are complex, but then so are the schools and the adults working in them. In all probability, our best chance for success will be found in coaching organizations like the Change Leadership Group.

## **SMALL SCHOOLS COACHES COLLABORATIVE**

The Small Schools Coaches Collaborative (SSCC) “provides sustained support for schools that receive reinvention grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation” (Small Schools Project, n.d.). Started in 2001, the Collaborative is part of the Small Schools Project at the University of Washington, which is in partnership with the National School Reform Faculty and the Coalition of Essential Schools Northwest Center. The Collaborative is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and assists schools through providing:

- An “outside” perspective
- Management advice
- Assistance with data analysis
- Connections to other schools
- Insights on teaching and learning practices
- Insights on how to plan for change
- Occasional facilitation during meetings
- Assistance with addressing issues of bias and equity
- Ideas about how to engage the community. (Small Schools Project, n.d.)

There are currently over 40 SSCC coaches working in more than 100 Washington State schools. Through a process-oriented model of support, coaches facilitate the work of schools to achieve their reinvention goals. Although the assistance provided by SSCC coaches varies according to the needs and circumstances of a given school, “each school coach’s responsibility is to help the school achieve its own goals, as long as they are consistent with the objectives of the grant the school received from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation” (Small Schools Project, n.d.).

### **The Small Schools Coaching Approach**

The Small School Coaches Collaborative supports the work of the Small Schools Project of the College of Education at the University of Washington. The Small Schools Project “works with both new small schools and those created by redesigning large comprehensive high schools into smaller, autonomous ones” (Small Schools Project, n.d.) The services include:

- Assisting in identifying and matching schools with coaches who work with the school during the design and implementation phases of the reform efforts.
- Creating materials and tools to support the design and creation of small schools.
- Convening conferences, workshops, and institutes for small school leaders, teachers, and community members.



- Assisting in the creation of small school networks, based on geography, common interest, or developmental issues.
- Publishing newsletters and reports focused on small schools.
- Identifying exemplary small schools that welcome visitors.
- Providing contact with experienced small school leaders. (Small Schools Project, n.d.)

The Collaborative started with the idea that coaches would collaborate with teachers, teacher-leaders, and principals to impact classroom instruction. To do so, the Collaborative initially identified three areas of focus (later expanded to six) for their work: 1) structure and design; 2) teaching and learning; and 3) changing the culture. Currently, SSCC coaches work in elementary, middle, and high schools. A full-time coach typically works in four schools, “providing about 30 days of on-site service per year” (Small Schools Project, 2004, p. 3). Most SSCC coaches spend one day a week in each of their schools, although some may spend two to four days a week at the school, once or twice a month. According to the Small Schools Project, comprehensive high schools may require additional coaching support:

During early planning, comprehensive high schools of more than 700 students receive 40 days of support per year; as they move into detailed planning and transitioning, each small school has its own coach for 30 days per year. A conversion high school, then, typically has from three to six coaches, with each assigned to a small school. A “lead” coach, almost always the original coach in the building, works an additional ten days at the school, usually working more closely with the principal. (p. 3).

The Collaborative supports coaches with two days a month of professional development activities. Coaches spend one day with their fellow K-8 or high school coaches and one day with National School Reform Faculty personnel. The smaller K-8 or high school coaches groups “typically have a focus on nuts-and-bolts issues or on planning ahead” (Small Schools Project, 2004, p. 4). NSRF professional development days consist of Critical Friends Group (CFG) meetings and time to focus on one of the six aspects of coaching work (expanded from the original three) identified by the Collaborative:

- building a professional learning community
- equity
- teaching and learning
- distributed leadership
- community engagement
- design and structure

## **SSCC Coaches**

According to recently gathered demographic information on SSCC coaches, of the 47 coaches who have worked with the Collaborative thus far:

- 60% were less than full time
- 72% had no prior coaching experience
- 51% remained in the position for two years
- 49% had previous administrative experience
- 47% had previous teaching experience
- 57% were over the age of 50
- 70% were female
- 89% were Caucasian (Small Schools Project, 2004)

The Collaborative noted, “While our coaching ranks more than doubled the second year, we have had little turnover, allowing us to build a considerable body of shared knowledge and expertise” (Small Schools Project, 2004, p. 3). In addition, “Very few coaches have had experience working in intentionally small schools, although many had been involved in substantial reform efforts over the past two decades” (p. 4). As a result, the Collaborative decided to “invest heavily in professional development rather than supervision” (p. 4), providing SSCC coaches with two days of professional development each month.

According to SSCC personnel, effective school coaches have the ability to develop rapport with school staff, to build strong relationships, to remain resilient throughout the process, to “ask good questions,” and to identify resources and think creatively about how to leverage them. The SSCC noted that not all successful coaches have been experienced teachers, and some have been effective working with their schools despite their lack of teaching experience. However, youth can be an obstacle in “getting in the door and establishing credibility...especially when working with principals.”

### **Coaching in Action**

SSCC coaches have worked in numerous schools in Washington State since 2001. Below we describe the coaching activities in two high schools, one middle school, and one elementary school, each in various stages of the coaching program. Collectively they describe the nature of the coaching taking place in the schools serviced by the Small Schools Coaches Collaborative.

#### **High School #1**

This urban high school in Washington is in the midst of converting from a large, comprehensive high school into four small academies within the school. During the first year of their Gates grant, the Small Schools Coaches Collaborative assigned the school a coach to facilitate the reform efforts. However, it became apparent that the coach was “not a good match” with the needs of or personalities in the school, and the Collaborative replaced the coach in the second year. By the third year of the grant, the school had successfully divided into four academies, each with their own coach, including the “lead coach” who works with both an academy and individually with the principal.

In the first three years at the school, the coaches took on a variety of roles and functions. The lead coach saw his role as very “open-ended,” stating that the Collaborative does not give much definition to the role: “Whatever it takes to move the work forward.” He did believe that his role was to help the academy meet the commitments outlined in their grant proposal. It was much more than that, however. He stated, “I need to make myself appear to be useful,” and noted he is therefore willing to assist teachers with matters that are not necessarily grant related.

Following the division into academies the roles of the coaches varied according to the needs of each academy and the skills of each coach. In one academy, the coach worked to help identify and find resources for the school and provided assistance helping teachers analyze data for instructional purposes. In another academy, the coach spent considerable time facilitating Critical Friends Groups and publishing a parent newsletter. In a third academy, the coach was instrumental in facilitating successful staff meetings.

While the Small Schools Coaches Collaborative did have certain expectations for the coaches, its reliance on a “contingency” approach to coaching was obvious at this school. Situational factors in the school overall and within each academy gave direction to the roles the coaches sought to fill. These factors included, among others, the strengths and weaknesses of the individual educators in the school or academy, the developmental stage of the organization, and the receptivity of the educators to receive the coaching. Of course, filling a perceived need in the school or academy was dependent on the strengths of a given coach. For example, some coaches were willing and able to go into classrooms to demonstrate instructional practices, but doing so was contingent upon the willingness of the teachers to accept such coaching. It was also contingent upon the developmental readiness of the organization to focus on instruction. In the first two years of the grant, the school was so focused on “structural” and scheduling issues of dividing into smaller academies that that effort took precedent over improving classroom instruction. Consequently, early on in the process coaches helped with the master schedule and other issues in the conversion process. Only when the school had successfully divided into academies in the third year were some teachers ready and willing to receive instructional coaching. However, this was also dependent on the specific strengths of a given coach. Some might be quite talented at helping a faculty work through problems with the master schedule or at helping establish and implement behavior protocols for faculty meetings; on the other hand, they may be less skilled in classroom instructional coaching. The “not a good match” situation is a direct reflection of a contingency approach to coaching.

As we talked with the teachers and principal at this school about their experiences with multiple coaches over the last three years, strong feelings emerged about the importance of the personality and style of the coach. One teacher noted, “Coaches here are all real individual. Some work great, some don’t. Some coaches are here a lot, some are here hardly at all.” More commonly noted was the importance of a good match between the staff and the coach. “You have to have good relationships in order to have it be successful,” stated the principal. The principal, coach, and teachers all noted that an effective coach has the ability to build relationships and trust, to listen, and to ask appropriate questions. Some also noted the importance of being able to help without

imposing themselves on others. “[The coach] doesn’t try to take over the activities of the group...he doesn’t try to assert himself as the authority.” Another teacher stated, “Respect for coaches went up when they dropped their own agenda and just tried to be helpful.”

The above comments should not be interpreted as negative comments about the SSCC coaches, but rather reflections of what the educators had learned about coaching. In fact, the staff at this high school gave generally positive feedback about their work with the Small Schools Coaches Collaborative. Many appreciated the outside perspective, expertise, resources, and “extra set of hands” coaches bring to the school. According to the principal, “[The coach] finds ways to support us so we get the work done.” Several others noted the coaches’ ability to build relationships and trust among a sometimes divisive staff as instrumental in their successful division into academies.

### High School #2

Similar to the first high school, this urban high school in Washington is in the midst of converting from a large, comprehensive high school into six small academies within the school. The Small Schools Coaches Collaborative assigned the school two coaches in the first year to facilitate the reform efforts. By the third year, the SSCC had assigned a coach to each of the six academies and each coach was in the building approximately 30 days during the year.

Also similar to the first high school we described, the coaches in this school served in a variety of ways. During our visit one of the coaches stated, “You try to come in with a specific idea of what the school should accomplish, but you have to be flexible with the needs of schools.” As a result, over the three years the coaches showed considerable flexibility and filled a variety of roles in the school depending on an immediate or long-term need. Early in the process, the coaches worked on the master schedule for breaking up into small academies. They spent time meeting with teacher leaders and talking about leadership. They gave guidance on how to run meetings and how to deal with resistant teachers. They facilitated academy meetings, oftentimes planning the meetings with teachers, modeling facilitation techniques, and debriefing afterwards. They planned professional development activities based on the needs and goals of the academies (e.g., instructional workshops, leadership retreats), and helped to bring in outside resources or personnel when needed. About this endeavor, one coach stated, “Our role is not to provide professional development, but to be a facilitator and collaborator.”

Throughout this process, the coaches attempted to be facilitative and non-directive, although several teachers saw some of the coaches as being very “hands-on.” The principal stated that in terms of facilitating meetings at retreats, “Sometimes they facilitate, sometimes they do the work.”

Through all of these roles, the overall experience with coaches at this school has been positive. The principal spoke highly of the coaches, stating, “Each one of them has

been extremely good, very well-grounded, very conscientious, and very supportive. . . . The coaches are one of the reasons we're going forward on [breaking up into small academies] and making gains every week." The principal also commented, "[Coaches] are nonjudgmental. They supply data for why something needs to be done or changed. Coaches bring people to the academies and do the research. This is so much more valuable than much of our district resources." Many teachers we talked with shared similar sentiments, saying that the coaches were very responsive, supportive, and motivating. "I don't know what I am going to do without her," noted one teacher. "She's a wealth of advice." Teachers described the coaches as being well-liked, well-respected, competent, and knowledgeable about best practices. One teacher stated, "It's helpful just having [the coach] be here, listening. I use [the coach] as a sounding board."

### **Middle School**

This suburban middle school in Washington received a three-year Model Schools Initiative Grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. As part of the technical assistance provided with the grant, the SSCC assigned a coach to the school during the second (2001-2002) and third (2002-2003) years of the grant, something the principal had requested from the foundation. In fact, the principal stated, "I had to push [the foundation] for a coach." Even though the school had requested a coach, it was not necessarily a smooth beginning because of an ambiguous role definition for the coach. "We weren't sure at first what the role of the coach was," stated one teacher, "Many thought she was a coach for the principal at first." Similarly, the coach noted, "There was no structure for the coaching in the beginning. I tried to be a good listener and establish relationships of trust, especially with the principal."

As the first year progressed, the role and activities of the coach at this middle school emerged and included setting goals, and planning and facilitating meetings. Over time, the coach provided meeting protocols, asked questions, started book groups, provided resources, and observed classrooms. In addition, the coach helped to define issues, to focus the staff, and to facilitate discussions.

When we visited this school, the principal and teachers all spoke highly of their coach. "She kind of became a part of our staff," stated one teacher. Several teachers reported they felt the coach had a particularly strong impact on the principal: "I felt a behind the scenes change in the way [the principal] dealt with things. . . . There's been an impact on how we do business here." The principal stated, "I loved having a coach. . . . It was invaluable for me. . . . I miss not having her now." The teachers, principal, and coach noted the ability to remain neutral, to build relationships and trust, to be a good listener, and to tolerate ambiguity as necessary skills for a successful coach. In addition, the teachers and principal noted previous classroom experience as integral to a successful coaching experience.

## Elementary School

Similar to the middle school, a suburban elementary school received a SSCC coach as a part of the Model Schools Initiative Grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for the second (2001-2002) and third (2002-2003) years of their grant. However, unlike the middle school that had requested a coach, this school was assigned a coach without their knowledge. “Getting a coach was a surprise,” stated the principal, “There wasn’t a lot of up-front communication about coaching and how that would work. . . . Trust had to be established.” Consequently, there was apparently no clear definition of the role of the coach during the first year, which the building educators described as initially problematic. The principal stated, “It took a while to figure out the coach’s role. . . . It took a while for the staff to be ready to be coached.” In fact, teachers reported that some staff thought the coach was there to assist them with computers, since some were referring to the role as “technical assistance.” Others thought the coach was there to judge the staff and therefore initially resisted her input.

Nonetheless, by the end of the second year, the principal and teachers all spoke highly of their coach and saw true value to the having that resource. Initially, the coach spent much of her time meeting with the principal to determine their progress with the grant to date, working with the building leadership team, and developing professional development activities around the grant goals. Beginning in the second year of coaching and the third year of the grant, the coach began facilitating Critical Friends Groups, analyzing data, presenting research, and providing resources to the teachers in the building.

Overall, the principal and teachers reported a positive impact by their SSCC coach. According to the principal, “[The coach] played a positive role in the accomplishments we made as part of the grant, especially in the development of professional community and professional development.” One teacher stated, “It was really useful to have someone who is extremely knowledgeable about how a school works. . . . Her role became more powerful over time as the staff saw her value. Trust was built and she wasn’t just an outsider anymore. . . . She almost became one of us.”

The teachers and principal in this school attributed this coach’s success to several qualities and skills. According to the principal, the coach worked well because of her prior administrative experience, which allowed the principal to be able to dialog and process his role with her. Others noted her ability to model group facilitation for the principal and other staff and her strong background in curriculum. In spite of early confusion about her role, she was able to bring a certain set of skills and experiences to the school, and respect for her and for the coaching role grew because of that expertise. In addition to her expertise, the staff felt she had the personal qualities and interpersonal skills that are necessary for successful coaching. In this instance, the individual strengths of the coach matched well with the needs of the school, and her individual qualities won her respect with the staff. Both of these are vital components of a contingency based coaching approach.

## Summary and Conclusions

The Small Schools Coaches Collaborative (SSCC), begun in 2001 as part of the Small Schools Project at the University of Washington, currently employs approximately 40 coaches who work in more than 100 Washington State schools. The Collaborative coaches provide:

an outside perspective, management advice, assistance with data analysis, connections to other schools, insights on teaching and learning practices, insights on how to plan for change, occasional facilitation during meetings, assistance with addressing issues of bias and equity, and ideas about how to engage the community. (Small Schools Project, n.d.)

SSCC coaches facilitate the work of schools through a process-oriented model of support, varying their assistance according to the needs and circumstances of each school. Thus, the collaborative does not have a specific or set coaching program per se. Interviews with SSCC personnel and visits to schools receiving SSCC coaching suggested a non-directive approach to coaching rather than a prescriptive plan for use in every school. That is, coaches tailor their work with schools and structure the interventions used to the context of each school. One coach described it as a “Whatever the school needs” approach, reflecting a contingency based design to the coaching. Despite this non-directive approach, however, some coaches reported being quite “hands-on” in their work with schools and noted the continual struggle between doing the work *for* the schools and helping the schools *do the work themselves*.

The educators we talked with noted the coaches’ knowledge, facilitation skills, and “extra set of hands” as integral to their work in school reform. Although “role ambiguity” appeared to characterize the initial period of time the coaches were in the schools, the coaches and educators were able to move past this uncertainty as the coaches assessed the needs of the schools and adjusted their role accordingly. Because of the lack of a comprehensive framework for working with schools, the varied needs of schools, and the varied skills and experience of coaches, the interventions employed in schools varied as well. The most commonly noted coaching activities included facilitating Critical Friends Groups, facilitating meetings, “asking questions,” analyzing data, and providing resources.

One of the SSCC coaches we spoke with noted an ongoing issue with coaching that is not limited to SSCC, but is common to this professional role: “What you do *for them* versus what they need to learn to do *for themselves*.” This dilemma gets at the heart of the coaching experience; the directive versus non-directive aspect of the enterprise and the expert versus facilitator roles that coaches may fill. In the schools we visited and with the coaches with whom we spoke, coaches are answering this question themselves based on their judgment and on the situational need. Perhaps this best describes the SSCC model of coaching.

## SOUTHERN MAINE PARTNERSHIP

The Southern Maine Partnership (SMP) began in 1986 with a commitment to “serving schools and universities by improving practice and by enabling good policy” (Southern Maine Partnership, n.d.). It is a membership organization that links schools and the university to support educational reform. Guided by an Advisory Council of superintendents, district administrators, teachers, principals, university representatives, and community members, the Partnership places a priority on equity in schools. Furthermore, the Partnership continues to support the values of participation, reciprocity, democracy, and collaborative inquiry.

The mission of the Partnership has evolved over time to meet the changing needs and issues of its members and of the broader field of education. At the outset, the mission of SMP was related more directly to educational institutions, while in the 1990s the mission was focused on linking the processes of school renewal and teacher development. Currently, following the general direction of the school reform movement, the Southern Maine Partnership’s mission reflects an emphasis on outcomes rather than on institutions or processes. To “fulfill the promise of public education through promoting equity for all learners now and in the future” (Southern Maine Partnership, n.d.), the SMP works toward four specific goals:

1. Classroom Practice: Ongoing development of opportunities and tools that help educators deepen and enhance their practice in teaching, learning, and assessment and promoting equity for all learners.
2. Organizational Design of Schools and Districts: Ongoing development of school and district capacity to create policies, structures, processes, and procedures that promote equity for all learners.
3. Community Connections: Ongoing development of local capacity to sustain communities, create opportunities for place-based education, and increase shared responsibility for promoting equity for all learners.
4. Leadership: Ongoing development of relationships, roles, tools, and opportunities that help current and future school leaders create the conditions that promote equity for all learners. (Southern Maine Partnership, n.d.)

These goals are accomplished through three broad strategies including *networking*, *applied assistance*, and *research, development, and dissemination*. Through networking, the SMP builds and supports networks of school districts, schools, the university, and educators at all levels to promote effective classroom practice, organizational design, community connections, and leadership. Applied assistance involves providing technical and strategic assistance to teachers, principals, district personnel, schools, and districts to promote effective practice, organizational design,



community connections, and leadership. In their efforts to conduct and circulate research, SMP documents, develops, and disseminates tools, practices, and strategies to promote effective practice in classrooms and schools across the state.

The Southern Maine Partnership operates according to a unified theory of change that embraces the following principles:

- Responsive and effective schools “add value” and positively affect the choices, careers, and futures of all students. (Silvernail, Edmonds, Lezotte)
- Caring, competent, and qualified teachers who know their students, their content, and how to connect the two, are the most single important school variable in enhancing achievement of all students. (NCTAF)
- Sustainable change, which promotes achievement of all students, requires ongoing professional development of educators that (1) draws on inside and outside knowledge, (2) provides initial training plus opportunities for guided practice and feedback and ongoing site-based assistance, and coaching, and (3) guarantees time to learn in context. (McLaughlin, Lieberman, & Miller; Joyce, Showers, & Bennett)
- Professional learning communities, where educators talk about practice, examine student and teacher work, observe each other, and engage in joint work, not only enhance teacher learning but impact the achievement of all students. (McLaughlin, Rosenholtz, Wenger, Snyder, Smith)
- “Leadership dense” schools that focus on instruction enhance achievement of all students; such schools have strong administrative leaders who nurture and support strong teacher leaders. (Sergiovanni, Elmore, Rutter, Lezotte)
- Systematic inquiry and data-based decision making lead to coherent practices, policies, and structures that enhance the achievement of all students. (Newman & Wehlage)
- Technology, when appropriately and thoughtfully used, promotes teacher learning and enhances achievement of all students.
- Community awareness, engagement, and participation increases depth and sustainability of educational change efforts on behalf of student learning. (Southern Maine Partnership, n.d.)

The Partnership’s Advisory Council guides the Southern Maine Partnership, giving strategic direction and advising the organization on budget issues and on the structure and interaction between projects, among other tasks. SMP has affiliations with a variety of organizations including the *National Network for Educational Renewal*; *National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching*; *Annenberg*

*Institute for Schools Reform; National School Reform Faculty; Project Zero; Looking at Student Work Collaborative; and League of Professional Schools.* The Partnership is also a regional center for the *Coalition of Essential Schools*.

In addition to providing coaching services, SMP offers a number of other services to educators and schools across Maine. For example, the Partnership published a document (*The CLASs Primer: A Guide for Comprehensive Local Assessment Systems Design and Use*) to support districts across the state that are developing local assessment systems as required by Maine state law. The Partnership also facilitated work groups in the areas of math, English, language arts, social studies, science, and critical thinking to design a tool for bridging the Maine Learning Results and locally developed assessments.

The SMP maintains close connections with the University of Southern Maine, and actively supports the teacher education program and the administrative leadership program. Members and non-members alike are supported in their educational pursuits through various professional development opportunities. Activities such as “Dine and Discuss” and “Curriculum Think Tank” offer teachers and administrators opportunities to gather regularly to discuss and share ideas. Topics of emphasis vary based on the needs of the participants. Recent topics of discussion include differentiated instruction and using data for school improvement.

### **Southern Maine Partnership Coaching Services**

As part of their agenda to enhance teaching and to provide technical assistance, the Southern Maine Partnership provides coaching services to schools and districts through several different projects and grants. Beginning in 1998, the federal government awarded Maine over \$500,000 in CSRD grants to “develop and implement research-based whole school reforms.” Of those schools receiving portions of the funds, four approached the SMP for contracted coaching services. Subsequent CSRD grants resulted in additional schools entering into formal arrangements for coaching assistance with the SMP.

Southern Maine Partnership staff also provided technical assistance through “reform coaching” for schools involved in the Learner-Center Accountability project. As part of the project, intended to help schools collect and analyze data about student learning, coaches provided assistance in creating models for schools’ comprehensive assessment systems. More recently, through a partnership with the Senator George J. Mitchell Research Institute, the Partnership provides high school change coaches to a number of schools across the state receiving restructuring grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

### **The Southern Maine Partnership Approach to Coaching**

The Southern Maine Partnership coaching program provides technical assistance so that schools can realize those reform goals that support statewide standards and assessments (Maine Learning Results and Comprehensive Assessment System). In secondary schools, technical assistance is aligned with the state’s *Promising Futures*

document. This document, developed in 1998 by a team of high school, higher education, state education representatives, and two high school students, presents a vision for secondary education in Maine centered on the attributes of *Rigor, Equity, and Personalization*. *Promising Futures* gives direction to the educational reform movement in Maine; the document also focuses much of the work of the Southern Maine Partnership. From planning and facilitating meetings to implementing and assessing programs and policies, SMP coaches work with individual schools across the state to realize the goals of *Promising Futures* and the Maine Learning Results. In this regard, SMP coaches focus their efforts on specific outcomes.

The Southern Maine Partnership coaching program is not based on a specific theoretical model, although it does work “from a unified theory of action.” Elements of this theory of action include ongoing professional development that draws from inside and outside knowledge, opportunities for guided practice and feedback, and time to learn in context. In addition, the theory embraces professional learning communities. In this regard, the Partnership’s approach appears to align closely with social interaction and collaborative learning. For example, SMP coaches spend a good deal of time facilitating collaborative decision-making meetings and discussions. Professional learning communities, which rely on a group interaction process and collaboration, are an important component of the SMP coaching program. On the other hand, the coaches also serve in a personal coaching capacity when necessary, often working directly with school administrators and faculty. In this role, their work may more closely reflect elements of adult development theory and information processing in that they ask faculty members to examine and reflect on their beliefs and assumptions, and to transform their thinking and practice based on those reflections.

In many ways, SMP coaches fall in the middle of our technical assistance/coaching continuum. For example, while SMP coaches often function as participating and respected members of the school team, they are also recognized as outside experts with particular knowledge and skills. They may address specific problems, such as helping to develop curriculum assessments, or accomplish specific tasks, such as leading community meetings. But they also spend considerable time building capacity and creating a climate for change by facilitating faculty discussions, leading CFGs, and meeting with district administrators and community groups. Because they are expected to function as outside experts, however, and because they are working toward clear and agreed upon (state) goals, SMP coaches tend to play a more directive role in the schools they serve, pushing those schools to become models of rigor, equity, and personalization.

### **Description of the Coaches**

The Southern Maine Partnership employs nine coaches, all of whom are former teachers. Collectively, they also have experience in central office curriculum and administration, building administration, school change coordination, media and library services, and higher education. Although the Partnership has added coaching staff over the past several years, there has been virtually no turnover. The SMP administration attributes the long tenure of coaches to the organization’s intentional efforts to transition

new coaches into the organization and to provide ongoing support for their work and professional growth. According to one of the directors, “We are a pretty flat organization and so we can stay connected fairly easily. We have norms on how to work together, and there is a great deal of interdependence among the group.”

SMP coaches and staff meet weekly to discuss organizational and business issues. They also meet once a month for a professional development retreat day; topics of discussion emerge from experiences and questions that they encounter in their work. During these consultancies, coaches present individual questions and concerns for reflection and discussion among the group. Given the geographic range of their assignments, SMP coaches rely heavily on cell phone conversations to get more immediate insight and feedback on questions and issues. Coaches also spend six days each year writing about their work.

In hiring coaches, the SMP administration considers a number of factors, including an applicant’s educational background, leadership experience, knowledge of organizational design, and group interaction skills and experience. More recently, as the focus of their work centers on secondary schools, the Partnership looks for applicants with high school experience.

Coaches are generally assigned to work with four schools. Although “three would be perfect,” such a configuration poses obvious financial constraints that the Partnership must recognize. The Partnership assigns coaches according to several criteria including, most importantly, the coaches’ strengths and the schools’ needs. Less critical, but also considered are geography and a coach’s background in urban or rural schools, for example. Assignments are drafted by the SMP directors and then are “put on the table” so that coaches can respond and make suggestions.

One of the most important characteristics of a successful coach, according to those involved with Southern Maine Partnership, is the ability to develop a trusting and collaborative relationship with school leaders. Stated one SMP administrator, “When a coach gets to the point where the principal begins the conversation – that’s when you know you’ve gotten inside. That’s when you know you’ve earned their trust.” Several coaches also emphasized the importance of being able to form relationships. “Being able to work with the school principal is critical . . . there has to be a relationship there.” Principals and teachers also recognize the necessity of building trusting relationships. According to one administrator, it is especially important that coaches take the time to understand a school’s needs, issues, and how their reform efforts fit into a larger context.

In addition to building relationships with school staff, the coach must be skilled in facilitating group meetings, in asking “the hard questions,” and in finding a balance between providing support and pushing for change. Coaches must also be familiar with a wide range of material and professional development resources.

## Coaching in Action

Southern Maine Partnership coaches provide a range of services and expertise to schools and educators across the state. In doing this, coaches fill the following roles:

- Co-facilitator
- Co-planner
- Facilitator
- Data collector/analyst
- Observer
- Participant
- Personal Coach
- Planner
- Trainer

The examples in Table 2 illustrate how two different coaches spent their time in two different schools over the course of a year.

**Table 2. How Coaches Spend Their Time**

<b>Coach #1 Role</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Coach #2 Role</b>	<b>Hours</b>
Co-facilitator	40.25	Co-facilitator	46.50
Co-planner	20.00	Co-planner	9.50
Facilitator	40.00	Facilitator	45.50
Data collector/Analyst	1.50	Interview/Researcher	2.50
Observer	10.00	Observer	12.50
Participant	55.50	Participant	44.25
Personal coach	34.00	Personal coach	12.50
Planner	3.00	Planner	1.00
Trainer	- - - -	Trainer	7.50
Total	213.25	Total	181.75

In these roles, coaches involve themselves in a range of activities including administrative meetings, classroom observations, committee meetings, community meetings, coordinator meetings, faculty meetings, content area meetings, leadership team meetings, off-site events, principal conferences, school board meetings, and workshop training.

### Co-facilitator

As a co-facilitator, the SMP coach works with school administrators and/or teachers to inform and move their work forward. For example, a coach in one school described sitting in on a science class where students were working on a long-term ecology project. After handing out a discussion sheet containing “some very thoughtful questions,” the coach assisted the teacher in framing the conversation around those questions. “The students carried on a productive conversation, and by the end of the period they were brainstorming outcomes for their project work.” To follow up on the

class activity, the coach and the teacher met during plan time to discuss next steps for the project. This was a two-and-a-half hour commitment by the coach.

In another instance, a coach assumed the role of co-facilitator in working with a school leadership team. For two hours, the coach led the team through a structured exercise designed to help them identify what parts of their reform work were going well and what challenges they were facing. By the end of the session, the team agreed that community engagement and communication were the most pressing challenges to their work.

As a final example, a coach joined the leadership team and several teachers in making a presentation to the school board. The coach, assisted by the teachers and the team, described for the board the school's involvement in an accountability site visit by their grantor. They clarified the goals of their grant work and summarized the current "lay of the land" for students at the school. The coach reported that their presentation seemed to be well received.

### **Co-planner**

Coaches also assume planning responsibilities in their school reform work. One coach shared a typical example, which involved meeting with a school leadership team to plan the agenda for an upcoming meeting and to identify current issues needing their attention. In another case, the coach met with subcommittee chairs of the leadership team to plan a day-long workshop for the entire school faculty. A third example was a meeting of the school coach, the principal, and the school design team coordinator to finalize plans for a community engagement meeting.

### **Facilitator**

Coaches spend a considerable amount of their time facilitating meetings and other grant-related gatherings. In one case, a coach met with teachers, an administrator, a district social worker, and a district guidance person to facilitate the development of a transition plan and curriculum to bridge the transition between middle school and high school. All were 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers, and by the end of the day the group did produce a plan and a curriculum. According to the coach, "The day went very well, better than I expected."

In another example of facilitation work, a coach met with the district superintendent to begin a conversation about de-tracking classes at the high school. One result of the meeting was that the coach agreed to provide the school with research and other resources on de-tracking to help the school move forward. In another case, a coach reported facilitating a text-based discussion with a 9<sup>th</sup> grade team on "10 Ways to Integrate Curriculum." The result was a productive conversation about ways that teachers were already integrating the curriculum and about how they might expand their efforts across the entire team. The discussion also focused on selecting a model for their next integrated unit.

## Observer

As observers, coaches attempt to gain insight into the culture, the policies, and teaching and learning practices at a school. This might mean shadowing students or sitting in on meetings. For example, one coach reported, “I shadowed a student who is trying to graduate early. He cited several reasons for wanting to move up his graduation, including a desire to go to college and the fact that hallways are too crowded at the school. [His] classes were mostly teacher-directed. One class was doing a project related to a previous college visit.”

In another case, a coach attended a school board meeting during which new staff were introduced, the district calendar was updated, and a video was shown and discussed. Similarly, a coach sat in and observed a school board meeting where members discussed and approved a proposal for weekly early release days. Finally, one coach described taking notes at a leadership meeting as a “process observer.” The focus of the meeting was a facilitated discussion of grant initiatives.

## Participant

As documented previously in Table 2, coaches spend a good deal of their time as participants in school activities. One coach, for example, joined a dialogue in which community members learned about the school’s grant initiative and examined school data. The same coach also participated in a grant review meeting with the school design team where they completed a year-end review of their grant progress. The team presented its work using a tuning protocol and then took comments and questions. Later, the coach joined a faculty meeting where participants generated ideas for the design team to consider in developing a new action plan.

In the case of another coach, participant activities included meetings with the curriculum coordinator to begin working on developing science assessment tasks; with the leadership team to focus on the transition from middle school to high school; with the retiring principal, new principal, and grant coordinator to discuss the reform efforts underway at the school; and with faculty members to share information on service learning and internship programs at other schools for possible future visits.

The following two examples taken from coaches’ logs illustrate ways in which coaches are involved in influencing teaching and learning.

- I worked with a science teacher to help continue the momentum of a place-based learning project.
- I worked with a science class to create awareness in the community about the water quality of a local stream. With the class, visited several sites along the stream and learned from experts about collecting water samples, about spawning conditions, about protecting the stream from runoff. We ended the day by brainstorming what the class could do for the stream and how data could be gathered to help the various stakeholders.

### Personal Coach

Southern Maine Partnership coaches also find themselves in positions where they serve as personal coaches for administrators and school faculty members. A coach shared the following example of a typical personal coaching activity.

[There was a] meeting with the social studies teacher and the grant coordinator where they reflected on yesterday's team meeting. [He is] feeling good about it but concerned about structure not being in place from the beginning. We discussed the "messiness" of forming a team, and the real learning takes place as a result. I commended his work, his commitment, and decided to write a memo to the entire team to commend them as well. The teacher is concerned about meeting times for teams and committees since most of faculty meetings are promised to grade level work. We will discuss it at the faculty meeting tonight.

In another instance, a coach met with the school principal before and after school to discuss the possibility of developing a process for making recommendations and for deciding on changes made by subcommittees.

There are several governing bodies in the school. The faculty council is a broad representative group that makes decisions with the principal. The leadership team is the overseer of the grant, both funds and goals. There is a small parent group, but this is an area the principal is very concerned about. He wants to get a larger core.

And in a more sensitive meeting, a coach reviewed the year with the school grant coordinator.

[She] felt that she was held back at the beginning by what she perceived as lack of leadership. She said that it got better as the year went on, and she hoped she hadn't let anyone down. I was just beginning to talk with her about her disappointing work for the grant review when students began to arrive so we will meet another time.

### Summary and Conclusions

The Southern Maine Partnership was formed in 1986 to facilitate improved practice in schools throughout Maine. The Partnership, funded through grants, contracts, and membership dues, is centered at the University of Southern Maine and maintains close connections with the university, particularly the teacher education program and the administrative leadership program.

To accomplish their mission of "fulfilling the promise of public education through promoting equity for all learners now and in the future," the Southern Maine Partnership works toward four specific goals: 1) classroom practice; 2) organizational design of schools and districts; 3) community connections; and 4) leadership. The Partnership's work closely aligns their program with the state's high school reform agenda, outlined in



the *Promising Futures* document and in the state standards and assessments. To realize the stated attributes of equity, rigor, and personalization, schools are encouraged to develop plans that best meet the individual needs of the school. However, it is clearly the mandate of the coach to ensure that schools maintain the focus on rigor, equity, and personalization as they develop and implement their short- and long-term plans. In this regard, the Southern Maine Partnership coaching program tends to employ a more directive than non-directive approach. Coaches are sources of organizational, instructional, personal, and leadership assistance, and yet they focus their work on helping schools realize their own goals and the state's goals.

While the work of the Southern Maine Partnership encompasses all grade levels, the coaches work only at the middle and high school level. Criteria for coaches include educational background, leadership skills and experience, knowledge of organizational design, and group interaction skills. Experience at the high school level is also beneficial given the focus on secondary school reform in Maine. In working with schools as facilitators, planners, observers, and participants, one of a coach's most useful skills is the ability to ask "hard questions." Coaches are also challenged to find the appropriate balance between supporting and pushing schools in their work.

## BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT

Bellingham, Washington is located in the far northwest corner of Washington State, approximately 90 miles from Seattle and 60 miles from Vancouver, British Columbia. In many ways, the Bellingham School District is a “typical” district for a community its size. The district covers 97 square miles and enrolls approximately 10,400 students. There are thirteen elementary schools, four middle schools, and three high schools. The district also has a post high school program for students with disabilities, an alternative high school, and preschool programs. Students are predominantly White (82%), with Hispanics as the largest ethnic minority (7.1%).

Although Bellingham is typical in many ways, it is also a unique district because of its emphasis on adult learning as a strategy to increase student achievement. Throughout the organization, professionals are doing their work and at the same time they are also being coached in their work. This “job embedded” professional development includes both *systems coaching* for administrative personnel and *instructional coaching* for teachers. These two coaching processes are closely linked and are helping to transform the entire district into a professional learning community.

Bellingham’s approach to school improvement has evolved over several years and is now a core element of the district’s school improvement efforts, efforts tied directly to their mission to provide a safe, supportive environment for students and to ensure their success in a changing world. Adult learning has been a key element of the district’s success, and coaching is one mechanism that has made this success possible. District personnel do not identify a “district coaching model” per se, but rather describe the effort as a “process” that emerged through two strands. The first strand began when a group of Bellingham teachers worked with The Learning Network coaching program to develop their literacy instruction. Subsequently, a systems coaching strand for administrators was developed based on the work of the district’s Gates grant coaches Tony Wagner and Daryl Conner. In a short time, these two strands converged, creating an approach that emphasizes and supports adult learning and dialogue throughout the district.

### Coaching In Action

If you were to visit a typical second grade classroom in a Bellingham school, you would see what you might expect to see. The students are sitting on the floor, gathered around their teacher. There is a simple story printed on poster paper in large, neat handwriting. The poster paper is on an easel, and the teacher is sitting casually on a stool next to it. The teacher questions the students about the story – What do they like about the story and why? The students reflect on the story and others their classmates have written. The conversation turns to brainstorming ideas for another story, and the teacher models the writing process with a new topic, while continuing to question the students along the way. The teacher and her students are talking and thinking like writers.

What you might not expect to see when you enter this classroom are the two adults who are quietly observing the scene from the back of the classroom. When the lesson is over, the visitors get ready to leave, and one of the students asks the teacher, “Which one was YOUR coach?” The teacher replies, “The nice lady in green.” “Who is the other lady?” the student wonders. “That’s her coach,” answers the teacher. The students are accustomed to having adults observing their classroom, and they know the extra adults come in to help their teacher learn to be a better teacher.

While the students are at lunch the process continues when the teacher meets with her coach and the district learning facilitator in a tiered instructional dialogue. The use of data and student work serve as the basis of the interaction, and the site coach utilizes a reflective dialogue process to help the teacher think about the recently completed lesson and to connect the discussion back to the teacher’s goals. During the process, key points are recorded on the teacher’s learning focus plan. The district learning facilitator is at the meeting to “coach the coach,” and she interjects when she feels the site coach needs support with the reflective dialogue process.

After school that same day, the superintendent is busy preparing for a district administrators meeting. His approach to the meeting is to follow four-phases of “change conversation” (described later) and to lead a discussion about overcoming the challenges of expanding instructional coaching to the high school level. You might expect him to be quietly working on the agenda; instead, he is talking with his executive coach to prepare for the meeting. The coach is prompting him to think about his own goals for leading the meeting. The coach will attend the meeting and will not be shy about publicly offering feedback to the superintendent or about suggesting a break during the meeting to allow for reflection and regrouping. In this situation, the superintendent models strategies and behaviors that are consistent with the district’s transformation into a professional learning community.

The deputy superintendent and executive directors within the district also participate in executive coaching. They set goals and receive public coaching during meetings where district administrative staff and principals present. Principals have been included in the district and instructional coaching models as observers and are beginning to pursue this type of support for themselves.

## **The Development of Coaching in Bellingham**

Bellingham has not always had a culture of open, professional dialogue. The primary catalyst for change in the district (and the subsequent introduction of coaching) was the publication in 1997 of schools’ standardized test scores in the local newspaper, a report that revealed low student academic achievement in some of the Bellingham schools. As one teacher said, “[Our school] was the lowest of the low, and the pain was acute.” Because they had experienced positive results from their work with The Literacy Institute and The Learning Network, teachers suggested that instructional coaching might be beneficial in raising student achievement. Three low-performing elementary schools volunteered to contract with The Learning Network to develop instructional coaches, and

the formal coaching process began during the 1997-1998 school year. The enthusiasm and positive results in these “pioneer” schools helped to move the effort forward, and more elementary schools were brought into the process between 1998 and 2002. Middle schools began the coach development process in 2002 and high schools in 2003.

Based on positive feedback and early evidence of increased student learning from these coaching efforts, the school board institutionalized a formal process that aligned professional development with strategic planning and incorporated “job embedded” staff development in more schools. District officials began the process of expanding the coaching initiative based on teachers’ experiences with The Learning Network. At the same time, they were convinced that it was critical to build capacity within the district rather than to continue their reliance on outside professional developers. In 2001, district policy was revised, requiring whole group, small group, and one-on-one coaching to be implemented at all school sites to support implementation of strategic plans. The district made a key decision to support instructional coaching by allocating funds to hire two staff members as “District Learning Facilitators.” These facilitators were responsible for providing coaching development and coaching in the K-8 schools. The district received a Gates Foundation grant that provided both funding for coaching and direct technical assistance in the form of district coaches. As a result, coaching activities expanded to include district administrators, a vital second strand to the coaching efforts.

In 2002, the district’s Gates grant project coaches began working with district administrators to use “organizational alignment” for managing change within the district. These project coaches worked with Tony Wagner, founder of the Change Leadership Group at Harvard University, and set into motion a powerful model whereby the top-down support at the administrative level and the bottom-up initiatives of the district began to converge. By participating in the coaching process, the district administrators modeled the same type of professional development that was expected of the teachers, proving by all accounts to be one of the most powerful and important steps the district took to gain and sustain momentum for coaching at the classroom level.

## Strand 1: Instructional Coaching for Teachers

### Roles and Responsibilities

**Coach developers.** Coach developers are teachers who have been released from their classroom teaching responsibilities to develop coaches and leadership teams at the building level. Also known as District Learning Facilitators, they provide professional development for building coaches over a two-year period through monthly site visits, specific guidance for coaches and administrators, and through professional development sessions for the staff. The coach developers may work with other experienced coaches to facilitate continued learning or to identify additional professional development resources.

**Site coach.** The site coach is typically a teacher who assists a specific school by providing effective professional development and by enabling individuals, groups, and the school to improve instructional practices that increase student academic performance.

Teachers and administrators collaborate in the selection of the site coaches, a practice seen as vital for the success of this type of job-embedded, on-site professional development. Site coaches receive two years of professional development from coach developers designed to increase their knowledge about instruction and assessment by building connections between theory and practice and increased student learning. During the first year, the support includes monthly site visits, observations, and instructional dialogue about the coach's classroom practice. The second year of training focuses on the development of skills and relationships for working alongside colleagues in a coaching situation.

**Building administrators.** By participating in activities led by the coach developers, building principals contribute to the success of the coaching initiative. They also approve individual professional goals and help shape the use of the building budget and individual staff development funds. The administrator can support teachers in working with coaches by assisting in goal development and by providing opportunities for instructional dialogue to take place. The building administrator also works with the leadership team to identify staff needs that then drive successful coaching, small group, and whole staff learning meetings. To prepare for these functions, administrators participate in the two-year coach development process and in leadership seminars and provide input to improve and refine the coaching process. Finally, administrators engage in district learning events that focus on facilitation strategies to support adult learning.

**Teachers.** Teachers receive one-on-one support from the site coach. However, the effectiveness of the entire process is dependent on the receptivity of the teacher to learn and to change behaviors. A flexible schedule, developed by the principal and leadership team, allows teachers time to meet with site coaches to reflect on their learning goals. In addition, teachers have time to engage in conversations to plan, problem-solve, and refine their understanding about teaching and learning.

Although the Bellingham coaching process utilizes expert coaches who are considered to be the “knowledgeable other,” they also use a variety of coaching strategies, including modeling, problem solving, and reflection. The coach generally begins with a clear target in mind for the teacher based upon their observation and on the teacher's focus plan. When the teacher does not reach a desired conclusion, the coach may simply “tell” the teacher the point they are seeking. In this case, the coach may stop the reflective process and say, “Okay, I’m going to just do a ‘tell’ so we can move on.” The coach then returns to a more reflective mode. In effect, the coaches utilize a directive coaching philosophy but do so through reflective dialogue.

## **Coach Development**

During the first year of the coach development process, the focus is on: 1) understanding instructional practices that are linked to increased student performance and success; 2) developing effective leadership team participation; and 3) learning to reflect on one's own professional practice. The site coaches, coach developer, and building

administrator meet monthly to analyze goals and plans and to focus on classroom practice and on the use of data.

During the second year, site coaches practice working alongside teachers to develop leadership skills, to continue reflecting and refining their own teaching practices, and to plan and implement a professional development agenda that supports the building's strategic plan. The coach developer observes and reflects with the site coach monthly to guide and develop understandings about the teacher's own classroom practice and about the process of instructional dialogue. At the same time, the site coach, with support from the coach developer, continues to support the site leadership team and administrator in data gathering and analysis.

### **Classroom Instructional Coaching**

Coaching serves to ensure that all students are in the daily presence of adults committed to their own life-long learning. It also supports the district in a process of continuous learning and renewal. To accomplish this, the Bellingham School District coaching process incorporates principles from the National Staff Development Council. Site coaches work alongside their colleagues to support their learning while the teacher interacts with students. They are not involved in the supervision or evaluation of teachers, and this is a key element to the success of the program. The Bellingham School District coaching process for teachers consists of the following seven components.

**1. Goal setting.** Teachers determine their own goals and select activities that will result in the achievement of those goals. Teachers complete a Learning Focus Plan that provides structure for the coaching visit and coaching dialogue.

**2. Alignment with building and district goals.** The site coach not only supports teachers in the development of instructional skills, but also plays a key role in ensuring the implementation of district expectations at the school level. District and state documents such as the existing district curriculum, *Core Understandings and Common Practices for Literacy Support Guide*, the *State Standards and Frameworks*, *Building Strategic Plans*, and *Building and District Strategic Plan Goals and Target Objectives* are key resources for this process.

**3. Implementation of best instructional practices.** Teachers intentionally plan for instruction based on assessment of student learning. Coaching enables teachers to develop further expertise in subject content, in teaching strategies, and in the use of technology so that they are better able to teach to high standards.

**4. Inquiry and reflection to guide learning.** Because inquiry is essential to learning, both for teachers and for students, teachers use planning documents, such as the Learning Focus Plan, to develop their own questions and to guide reflection about their instructional practices. Through reflection, they model not only good teaching, but good learning as well. For example, a teacher might say, "I'm wondering what my audience [the students] would find interesting in my writing."

**5. Classroom visits.** The classroom observation process allows teachers and coaches to share an experience that directs their instructional dialogue. The site coach visits a teacher's classroom during a lesson, and the nature of the visit may range along a continuum from consulting, to collaborating, to expert/directive coaching.

**6. Instructional dialogue.** Site coaches guide teachers through reflective conversations by asking them to describe a shared experience and by analyzing the actions taken by the teacher. The site coach skillfully listens to a challenge identified by the teacher and then supports the teacher in addressing that challenge. To facilitate the conversations coaches employ reflective processes, learning conversation templates and questions, and the Learning Focus Plans.

**7. On-going and job-embedded activities.** Each school creates a structure and schedule for coaching support based on teachers' needs and the school's strategic plan. The structure provides for on-going and in-depth coaching support for all staff members, although not all receive the same level or same type of support.

Two additional components of coaching that impact instruction are the *Learning Focus Meetings* and *Leadership Team Meetings*. Learning Focus Meetings are small group professional development experiences and serve as a means for all the developing coaches and administrators to further refine their knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward effective instruction. These meetings occur twice a month during the school year. A coach developer sets the agenda and facilitates the meeting one time each month. The site coaches that are "in development" plan and facilitate the second monthly meeting. The agenda and minutes from the meetings are shared with the coach developers.

Leadership Team Meetings provide the opportunity for a coach developer to provide support for a building's leadership team. The meeting is on the day the coach developer is in the building for a site visit, and the type of support is based on the collective needs of the team. The gradual release of responsibility from the coach developer strengthens and builds the capacity of the site leadership team. Support might include data collection and analysis, guiding questions, demonstrations for facilitation as well as feedback on growth demonstrated from the leadership team. These meetings provide the opportunity to consider next directions for the building based on data collection and linked to the site's strategic plan.

## **Strand 2: Systems Coaching for Administrators**

The district views coaching to improve literacy and instruction as a necessary but insufficient approach to school reform. For the district to reach its goal that 90% of the students meet standard in reading, writing, and math, the entire district needed to commit to the goal and to function as a collaborative team. Therefore, systems coaching for organization alignment is also a district focus with an emphasis on an understanding of organizational roles and skillful conversations about change. When members of the organization understand the roles and responsibilities around change, they are better able

to direct their efforts. The understandings associated with the various roles allow effective and important conversations to occur about the change process and enhance the collaboration necessary for change to occur.

### **Conversations and structure for organizational alignment**

Throughout the coaching activities at this level, there is a focus on *functional* roles with unique responsibilities (Conner, 1993). Understanding these roles and responsibilities helps people understand the flow of authority and accountability throughout the system, which helps everyone understand what they and others are supposed to do.

Once everyone understands the roles and responsibilities for alignment, skillful conversations about change can take place. These conversations require courage because there will be differences in opinion and experience encountered along the journey to reach commitment and alignment. The Bellingham School District utilizes a four-phase approach to guide conversations about change. These phases help enhance the possibility that: 1) People will be clear about where the organization is heading; 2) The leader will receive information that is missing and important to the success of change; and 3) People will be ready and committed to follow. There are four phases of change conversations:

- Phase One – Insure Clarity of Expectations: State your expectations of those who will be implementing the change.
- Phase Two – Insure Clarity of Shared Understanding: Check for understanding.
- Phase Three – Listen to Reactions: Solicit reactions to your expectations.
- Phase Four – Determine Readiness: Inquire about people's level of confidence in implementing the change.

Gates grant project coaches work actively with district administrators using these tools to achieve organizational alignment. The coaches provide feedback, review goals and encourage reflection. One of the most powerful aspects of this coaching model is that the coaches *publicly* guide the administrators, often using breaks in meetings to provide feedback and guidance and to help an administrator utilize the alignment and communication processes. The public nature of the coaching process models vulnerability to others who are also participating in coaching. The Bellingham staff noted that the coaching process helped administrators to engage in difficult conversations and to build stronger adult relationships. By participating in a coaching process, administrators have moved the district toward organizational alignment while simultaneously modeling the same type of professional development expected of the teachers. Thus, systems-level coaching has been an essential component of creating and sustaining change in the Bellingham School District.

### **Key Elements to the Success of Coaching in Bellingham**

Educators in the Bellingham School District believe that coaching in the district is a work in progress and has yet to reach its full potential. For example, while coaching has



proved to be a valued approach to professional development in the elementary schools, there remain teachers who are reluctant to take advantage of the opportunity. In addition, coaching has only recently begun in the secondary schools, where the roots of the practice are still shallow. Still, the positive effects of the district-wide coaching efforts are noteworthy, and there are indications that classroom practice is beginning to change. There is also evidence that the organization is aligning its policies due, in part, to the coaching practices. Overall, the early results of these efforts are very encouraging with considerable potential for replication in other districts. The growth and success of the coaching in Bellingham is due to several factors worth noting.

### **District level commitment**

From the beginning, the district provided resources to encourage and expand the practice. These coaching activities require considerable staff time, and the district has been creative in finding resources to provide adequate time for the staff. From pursuing grants to utilizing job sharing, the district has found resources to implement the process. Additionally, institutionalizing the coaching process into board policy sent a strong message about the district's commitment to the initiative.

### **Culture of a professional learning community**

For a number of years, the district embraced the concept of becoming a professional learning community and of developing a culture that recognizes the importance of change and continuous improvement. The coaching process is a key strategy for creating change. The reflective nature of the coaching process has changed the culture of the district from compliance to one of commitment through communication and transparency. The importance of adult learning is acknowledged, and processes are in place to support an environment of adult learning. One staff member said of the changes in the district's culture, "You have to believe in adults as learners as well as students as learners." Most importantly, district office personnel, led by the superintendent, participated in the process and modeled the vulnerability and the willingness to learn necessary for such a culture to arise.

### **Common language**

The alignment process created a common language and set of expectations throughout the district, helping all participants feel part of a much larger effort. A one-page diagram depicting the teaching/learning cycle was a common visual aid that appeared in discussions at all levels of the coaching process and provided tangible evidence of the common district language. Likewise, the fact that everyone, from administrators to teachers, is participating in the coaching process has helped to create a common language around the reflective process. It has also meant that reluctant individuals cannot transfer to another school to escape involvement since expectations are the same throughout the district.

### **Rigorous reflective process**

The coaching process used in Bellingham is a rigorous, reflective process that challenges teachers at their current level of understanding and creates a dissonance or creative tension within the individuals. Creating and dealing with this dissonance requires considerable skill, and coaches must tread carefully to push teachers *forward* without pushing them *away*. The reflective practice fosters courageous conversations and communication becomes more transparent, moving teaching from a private act to a public act. This interaction requires a high level of trust between the teacher and the coach, as well as the political and moral will of the district leadership to undertake such a task.

### **Coaching to a clear vision**

The Bellingham School District has a clear focus on improving student achievement and increasing clarity around what good teaching and learning should look like. The alignment of the coaching process with Washington State standards for student learning, known as the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs), is an important factor leading to its acceptance. Thus, teachers' actions reflect a common focus and vision through the reflective activities of the coaching process. Additionally, the district has identified a set of common practices and key understandings from current research used by coaches and teachers to guide instruction.

### **Individualized coaching**

For the process to be successful, Bellingham recognizes that coaches must have the knowledge and skills to meet the individual needs of teachers. Coaches must be able to identify a teacher's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978), to design appropriate learning activities for the teacher, and then to make relevant connections to the school's goals and target objectives. Teachers learn to set their own goals, and the coaches provide support to help them extend their learning related to their goals. One teacher in the district commented, "Coaches help you internalize the reflective process." Another noted, "You have to take it on as your own learning [...It is] so much more powerful."

### **Qualities of coaches**

The coach development process requires that the coach becomes an instructional expert, and that the classroom becomes a learning laboratory for the rest of the school. However, even though coaches are to become experts, they remain learners as well. Coaches need continual support from the district coach developers to maintain their focus and skills. They sometimes work collaboratively with their teachers, but there are also times when they must push the teachers forward. One teacher noted that the coach is initially a "knowledgeable other" who drives the reflective process; over time, however, teachers internalize the reflective process, and the push comes from within.

## **Cautionary Features**

In discussing the coaching process with Bellingham teachers, administrators, and coaches, two challenges emerged — resistance to coaching by some teachers and the relationship between coaching and the teacher evaluation process.

### **Resistance to coaching**

Not surprisingly, some teachers in the district have been resistant to the coaching process. For some, teaching has long been a solitary act that becomes, through coaching, a much more public act. Others are resistant because they fear being exposed as someone who “doesn’t know it all.” Furthermore, there are those teachers who are convinced that coaching is just one more fad that will eventually disappear. Finally, resisters express concern that they will not be able to meet student needs or to deliver necessary content if they are asked to change their instructional methods. The most powerful antidote to the resistance appears to be modeling the use of coaches throughout all levels of the organization. In addition, the enthusiasm and success of other teachers encourages participation. Bellingham has facilitated the process by providing support to early adopters and by mandating that implementation throughout the district take place over five years. They also developed university partnerships, designed a strong induction process that included new teachers and mentors, and intentionally worked with the teachers’ association to develop understanding around the program.

### **Coaching versus evaluation processes**

Issues have arisen about the relationship between the coaching process and the teacher evaluation process. The district has attempted to separate the two processes, and yet some teachers have serious concerns about the potential link between the two. The coaching process is an open and reflective process, and teachers must admit weaknesses in order to make improvements. On the other hand, the principal is expected to conduct teacher evaluations while at the same time staying actively involved in the coaching process. As a consequence, it has been difficult for some teachers to trust the coaching process because they fear that information gathered during the coaching session might be used in their evaluation. These apparently conflicting roles put the principal in a difficult situation of trying to balance coaching and evaluation activities. To address the concern that the coaching process could jeopardize the evaluation process (and perhaps even employment status), teachers identified as “needing improvement” are not involved in the coaching process. However, the district is currently working with the teachers to address these issues.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

The Bellingham School District implemented a coaching process in response to a need to improve student academic achievement. Coaching activities began voluntarily in low-achieving elementary schools and quickly spread to other schools in the district. Because of the apparent success of coaching and increased academic achievement,

coaching as a professional development activity with financial support became part of board policy for the district. The district responded with support structures, staffing, and professional development activities to promote the coaching process at all levels of the organization, including top district administrators and the superintendent. As the coaching activities developed, Bellingham achieved some of the highest elementary test scores in the state.

The Bellingham School District coaching approach attempts to create a community of learners and to ensure that all students are in the daily presence of adults committed to their own life-long learning. The district's coaching process has several essential components, including goal setting, alignment with building and district goals, implementation of best instructional practices, inquiry and reflection to guide learning, classroom visits, learning-focused conversations, and on-going and job embedded staff development. The process involves coach developers, site coaches, building administrators, and teachers. Other coaching processes include learning focus meetings and leadership team meetings. At the teacher level, the process is designed to improve instructional practice to increase student academic achievement. At the district and school administrator level, the process is designed to align the entire system of policies and practices with the learning goals of the schools.

Several factors have contributed to Bellingham's success. Both the school board and district leadership recognized early in the change process the value of such professional development, and responded with the requisite commitment and resources to expand literacy coaching to include coaching for adult learning. They also recognized the need to create a district culture where adults were secure enough to trust the coaching process and to create a professional learning community. This has provided some degree of consistency across the district for professional development and has resulted in a rigorous questioning of classroom practices *and* of district policies. The resulting changes have led to an increasingly clear vision of teaching and learning aligned with the state's academic learning requirements and assessments.

The coaching approach taken by the Bellingham School District illustrates the successful implementation of two strands of coaching that focus on both the system and on classroom instruction. The successful coaching process that began as a grassroots effort at the school level (bottom-up) led to an expansion of coaching through district leadership (top-down). Systemic coaching for administrators resulted in a stronger alignment of district practices and policies with instructional learning goals. The simultaneous bottom-up and top-down implementation provided a unique situation that appears to have stimulated ownership of the process throughout the organization.

At the core of the coaching process is a belief that the key to increased student achievement and systemic change is adult learning. The activities reflect many constructivist influences and are firmly grounded in social interaction theory where, as we described earlier, "Learning is a reciprocal experience benefiting all involved by moving the participants to deeper levels of thinking." In the Bellingham District, all adults—the teachers, the principals, the superintendent, *and* the coaches—are expected to

learn and improve together in a way that results in improved student learning. In this model, the role of the coach is to facilitate collaborative conversations among peers, including the coach, that focus on collaborative dialogue, problem-solving exercises and shared experiences. At the same time, the influences of various systems theories help bring understanding to the interrelationships among organizational components and lead to an alignment of policies and actions resulting in systemic change.

## **PART III: SAMPLE COACHING ORGANIZATIONS**

This section contains brief descriptions of over 30 organizations and programs that focus primarily on district or school-wide coaching for systemic change. These descriptions are based on self-report information provided by the organization through websites, hard documents, or interviews with organization representatives<sup>1</sup>.

These brief descriptions are not intended to provide a comprehensive overview of each organization or program. We suggest that readers refer to each organization's website and contact information to obtain more detailed information about the program. We included organizations whose primary focus for coaching is for school-wide reform. We attempted to include all appropriate organizations, but recognize that the field of education changes rapidly and such organizations come and go on a regular basis; any exclusions are unintentional, and we welcome updated information when available.

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<sup>1</sup> Each respondent was sent a copy of the description of their program and was given an opportunity to make changes prior to publication.

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**PROGRAM: ACCELERATED SCHOOLS PROJECT**

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<b>Contact information:</b>	National Center for Accelerated Schools University of Connecticut 2131 Hillside Road Unit 3224 Storrs, CT 06269 (860) 486-6330 (860) 486-6348 (fax)
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.acceleratedschools.net">www.acceleratedschools.net</a>
<b>General description of coaching:</b>	<p>The general purpose of Accelerated Schools Project (ASP), a non-profit organization, is to ensure the climate, culture, and governance of the schools with which they work is supportive of powerful learning, defined as the high interest and engagement type of instruction traditionally found in gifted and talented programs. Coaching consists of both an external coach and internal coaches to assist the school in following the ASP model. External coaches are provided by ASP. Internal coaches (usually teacher leaders) are trained at regional ASP centers with an initial 5-day session followed by 2- or 3-day monthly training sessions. ASP regional centers also communicate throughout the year by telephone, e-mail, and fax.</p> <p>ASP helps schools build internal governance and decision-making capacity in order to establish and maintain a culture that fully supports powerful learning and student achievement. ASP assists schools with engaging the community to set a vision and goals for the school's transformation. ASP guides the school through problem-solving, hypothesis testing, and evaluating school results while providing on-going professional growth for staff in the delivery of powerful learning.</p>
<b>Grades served:</b>	K-12
<b>Sources of funding:</b>	Fees for service
<b>Examples of work:</b>	ASP began by working with low-income, urban schools. ASP has worked with over 1,600 schools, and currently works with over 200 schools of varying demographics.
<b>Cost:</b>	\$60,000 per year for the first three years (minimum three year agreement).
<b>Coaching frequency:</b>	ASP staff provide 18 days of on-site training and support per year. A leadership team made up of representative teachers, internal coaches and school administration receive monthly training in addition to their initial intensive five-day training workshop.

**PROGRAM: AMERICA’S CHOICE SCHOOL DESIGN**

**Contact information:** National Center on Education and the Economy  
555 13<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Suite 500 West  
Washington, D.C. 20004  
(202) 783-3668  
(202) 783-3672 (fax)

**Website:** [www.ncee.org](http://www.ncee.org)

**General description of coaching:** America’s Choice School Design (ACSD), a comprehensive reform model, aims to ensure that every student is successful on state and local assessments and is prepared for college. ACSD focuses on five key tasks in preparing students for success: (1) standards and assessment; (2) aligned instructional systems; (3) high performance management, leadership, and organization; (4) professional learning communities; and (5) parent/guardian and community involvement.

Coaching is key to successful implementation of ACSD. Using an “apprenticeship” model of learning, ACSD staff provide intensive professional development for the principal, school coaches and members of the Leadership Team. ACSD schools have coaches who work directly with teachers to implement the design in their classrooms. Coaches attend institutes, and principals participate in special academies and networks focused on content (leadership, literacy, mathematics, and science), pedagogy, and coaching skills. In addition, ACSD staff makes monthly on-site visits to the school to coach the principal and the Leadership Team in the application of key strategies and design elements. The goal is to strengthen the school, district and/or state’s internal capacity to implement a standards-based instructional system.

**Grades served:** K-12

**Sources of funding:** Fees for service

**Examples of work:** ACSD currently works in 16 states with over 400 large and small urban, suburban, and rural schools.

**Cost:** The cost of implementing the ACSD model, including coaching, is approximately \$75,000 to \$105,000 per year depending on the type of school, enrollment, and other factors.

**Coaching frequency:** ACSD provides direct coaching services in monthly on-site visits and network meetings, and at quarterly training sessions with curriculum coaches.



**PROGRAM: ATLAS COMMUNITIES**

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**Contact information:** 222 Third Street, Suite 1320  
Cambridge, MA 02142  
617-577-8585  
888-577-8585  
617-577-8686 (fax)

**Website:** [www.atlascommunities.org](http://www.atlascommunities.org)

**General description of coaching:** ATLAS Communities, a non-profit organization, “*is a comprehensive school improvement initiative designed to create high performing schools that serve all students well*” ([www.atlascommunities.com](http://www.atlascommunities.com)). ATLAS works with school districts by providing Site Developers who coordinate the efforts of the teachers and administrators and who provide training in ATLAS’s methodologies. The Site Developer also provides coaching to Whole Faculty Study Groups, helping to organize professional development activities for the school/district. The typical ATLAS program lasts for three years. Follow up contracts often extend the engagement.

Key elements of the Site Developer's role include:

- Assisting in the identification of school assets and needs
- Facilitating the development of a plan for implementing the ATLAS design framework
- Providing training and support for key elements of the ATLAS design
- Facilitating the development of a communication plan
- Building capacity and mechanisms for internalization
- Communicating current status of the work to all stakeholders
- Documenting status and progress in the form of an Annual Report

**Grades served:** Pre K-12

**Sources of funding:** Fees for service

**Examples of work:** ATLAS has been adopted by schools in large urban districts (e.g., Detroit, NYC, Philadelphia, Seattle), mid-size districts (e.g., Albany, Cherokee County GA), rural districts (e.g., AuSable, NY; Crossnore, NC; Baldwin, MI), and the occasional suburban district.

**Cost:** \$25,000 to \$85,000 per year depending on the size of the school and the comprehensiveness of the ATLAS implementation.

**Coaching frequency:** Site Developers visit schools on the average of one day a week.

**PROGRAM: BAY AREA COALITION FOR EQUITABLE SCHOOLS**

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**Contact information:** 1720 Broadway, Fourth Floor  
Oakland, CA 94612  
(510) 208-0160  
(510) 208-1979 (fax)

**Website:** [www.bayces.org](http://www.bayces.org)

**General description of coaching:** The Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES), a non-profit organization, was established in 1991 as the regional center for the National Coalition of Essential Schools. BayCES' mission is to create and sustain networks of high-achieving and equitable small schools. BayCES fulfills its mission by recruiting, developing and supporting teacher, administrative, and community leaders through on-site coaching, equity-centered professional development, new school incubation, networking services, community partnerships and school-district redesign.

Coaches work with leaders in schools, districts, and communities to interrupt historic inequities in student achievement, graduation, and college readiness. Coaches provide support in the areas of school design, data-based inquiry, instructional leadership, equity-centered professional learning communities, equity pedagogy, and leading for equity.

**Grades served:** Pre K-12

**Sources of funding:** Largely funded by private foundations, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Elizabeth and Stephen Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, East Bay Community Foundation, Clorox Foundation, Walter & Elise Hass Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, and Wayne & Gladys Valley Foundation.

**Examples of work:** BayCES works with schools and districts in the San Francisco Bay area, including the Berkeley Unified School District, Oakland Unified School District, and Emery Unified School District.

**Cost/Coaching Frequency:** Schools may contract with BayCES at two levels of affiliation:

- Networking Level Affiliation: \$500 plus \$650/day for coaching.
- Coaching Level Affiliation: \$20,000-25,000/year includes 80 days of coaching.

BayCES also provides limited fee-for-service coaching for non-affiliated schools.

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**PROGRAM: BAY AREA SCHOOL REFORM COLLABORATIVE**

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**Contact information:** 181 Fremont Street, Second Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
(415) 348-5500  
(415) 348-1340 (fax)

**Website:** [www.basrc.org](http://www.basrc.org)

**General description of coaching:** The Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC) is a non-profit organization working to improve the academic performance of Bay Area students and to eliminate the achievement gaps between student groups. BASRC provides school leaders (including both teacher leaders and administrators) with professional development, tools, and coaching to ensure that best practices are actually implemented in classrooms, schools and districts.

BASRC schools receive both a school coach to work with the principal and leadership team, and an executive coach to work with the district superintendent and staff, and school principals. The coaching process includes assessing needs, setting goals and targets, building an instructional action plan, putting in place systems to monitor student performance, adopting instructional materials, and planning professional development and collaboration time for teachers. BASRC's coaching philosophy is based on three main ideas: (1) the goal of coaching is to build capacity, not to act as adjunct staff to do the work; (2) BASRC's framework and recommendations are based on experience and research; and (3) whatever the work is, it needs to include all of the elements of continuous improvement (goal setting, data collection, planning, implementation, data analysis, reflection, and re-planning).

**Grades served:** K-12

**Sources of funding:** BASRC is funded by foundation and corporate grants, government contracts and grants, gifts from individual donors, and fees for services.

**Examples of work:** BASRC works with an expanding network of districts in California that range from large urban districts to medium and small school districts.

**Cost:** BASRC generally charges \$50,000 per year for coaching.

**Coaching frequency:** The frequency of coaching varies. Executive coaches work with superintendents and district leaders approximately 2-3 times per month, while school coaches are generally on-site more often.

**PROGRAM: THE BIG PICTURE COMPANY**

**Contact information:** 17 Gordon Avenue, Suite 104  
Providence, RI 02905  
(401) 781-1873  
(401) 781-1874 (fax)

**Website:** [www.bigpicture.org](http://www.bigpicture.org)

**General description of coaching:** The Big Picture Company, a non-profit organization, uses both prescriptive and facilitative coaching to work with principals and teacher leaders to implement the Big Picture School design. *“Big Picture Schools are small, personalized communities of learning, where students are encouraged to be leaders and where school leaders are encouraged to be visionaries.”* The Big Picture Company believes that *“principals act as change agents within the schoolhouse, in their communities, and in the larger context of educational reform”* ([www.bigpicture.org](http://www.bigpicture.org)) and developed The Year Before Opening (TYBO) training program for principals the year before opening a Big Picture School. TYBO includes the following support:

- A designated start-up coach from Big Picture Company
- Onsite training at The Met and/or at other Big Picture Schools
- Participation in The Big Bang! - an annual conference for all Big Picture School staff
- TYBO telephone and video conferences
- Online forums
- Onsite visits from Big Picture staff
- Participation in cross-site visits between two existing Big Picture Schools

Once their schools are open, principals and teacher leaders receive ongoing coaching and other assistance from the Big Picture Company.

**Grades served:** Primarily high schools; some middle schools

**Sources of funding:** Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

**Examples of work:** The Big Picture Company targets high poverty, urban schools in California, Rhode Island, Illinois, Colorado, Michigan, and Indiana.

**Coaching frequency:** Year 1: 20 on-site days per year  
Year 2: 12 on-site days per year  
Year 3 & 4: < 12 on-site days per year

**PROGRAM: BOSTON PLAN FOR EXCELLENCE**

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**Contact information:** 6 Beacon Street, #615  
Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 227-8055  
(617) 227-8446 (fax)

**Website:** [www.bpe.org](http://www.bpe.org)

**General description of coaching:** Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE) has existed for 20 years as a non-profit reform partner of Boston Public Schools (BPS). BPE initiated and raised funds for school-based coaches, testing out the work in 27 Boston schools. In 2003, BPE turned the management of all its coaches to BPS. BPE designed a collaborative coaching model called Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL).

There are four components to the CCL process: (1) inquiry to determine what teaching practice to concentrate on; (2) lab site/classroom demonstration; (3) collegial observation of the practice in the classroom; and (4) debriefing. The coach facilitates the CCL cycles, which include teams of teachers and often the principal. A critical component of the process, based on research literature and experience, is teacher collaboration.

The CCL model is informed by four beliefs: (1) teacher learning is on-going and continuous; (2) making one's practice public is at the core of a professional community; (3) collegial analysis of instructional practice on-site opens up the great expertise that exists in most schools; and (4) teachers can take the lead in adopting effective strategies.

**Grades served:** K-12

**Sources of funding:** The Boston Plan for Excellence is funded by the Annenberg Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and numerous local foundation and corporate grants.

**Examples of work:** BPE works with Boston Public Schools.

**Cost/Coaching Frequency:** Full time BPE coaches have a 185-day contract and are paid \$450 per day.

**PROGRAM:   BREAKING RANKS**

**Contact information:**       The Education Alliance  
Brown University  
222 Richmond Street, Suite 300  
Providence, RI 02903  
(401) 274-9548  
(800) 521-9550  
(401) 421-7650 (fax)

**Website:**                 [www.alliance.brown.edu](http://www.alliance.brown.edu)

**General description of coaching:**       The Education Alliance's Breaking Ranks™ process of school reform works with the conversion of large comprehensive high schools into smaller, more personalized learning environments over a period of one to four years. Through this process, the Education Alliance, a department within Brown University, provides schools mentoring, networking and coaching services in the areas of *personalization and the school environment; curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and effective professional learning communities*. Coaches help schools to understand and use student achievement data to improve instruction, to develop leadership among faculty and staff, and to create a professional learning community within the school.

Schools work with a Breaking Ranks™ coach to develop a strategy for breaking-up into small schools, to create a design team, and to identify and develop professional development or technical assistance needs. Workshops for schools include *Personalized Learning, The Power of Advisories, Teaching to Each Student*, and *Working with Teams*.

**Grades served:**       Secondary schools

**Sources of funding:**       Federal funds  
Fees for service

**Examples of work:**       Breaking Ranks™ works primarily with the conversion of large comprehensive high schools, primarily in the Northeastern United States, and also supports existing small schools in becoming more personalized learning environments.

**Cost:**                    The cost varies according to school demographics and other factors. Generally, \$25,000 (planning year) to \$100,000 per year.

**Coaching frequency:**       Each coach works with four schools and spends two full days each month in each school.

**PROGRAM: CENTER FOR COLLABORATIVE EDUCATION**

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**Contact information:** 1 Renaissance Park  
1135 Tremont Street, Suite 490  
Boston, MA 02120  
(617) 421-0134  
(617) 421-9016 (fax)

**Website:** [www.ccebos.org](http://www.ccebos.org)

**General description of coaching:** The Center for Collaborative Education (CCE), a non-profit organization, works with networks of schools and districts to create equitable and democratic schools with high student engagement and performance, particularly in districts with historically underserved students. CCE believes that *in order to improve and sustain student learning, school staff need to focus deeply on (1) improving learning, teaching, and assessment, and (2) creating the structures and supports in schools that enable all students to learn at high levels, and all staff to engage in continuous professional development and purposeful collaboration* ([www.ccebos.org](http://www.ccebos.org)).

CCE coaches work with individual schools on all aspects of school (re)-design and implementation. The coach's role is to facilitate the change process, provide resources, and guide teachers and administrators while helping to build their capacity to do this work on their own. CCE coaches also work to build district, union, and community capacity to support school reform, and provide professional development through week-long institutes, Critical Friends Groups, school visits, and specific practices. In addition, CCE coaches work with school staff to set standards, develop curricula, examine student work, collect and analyze data, and observe peers.

**Grades served:** K-12

**Sources of funding:** Multiple funders, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Boston Foundation, Barr Foundation, Hayden Foundation, Cox Charitable Trust, and the Goldberg Family Foundation

**Examples of work:** CCE currently works with urban districts to create small, autonomous, vision-driven, accountable schools, both start-up and conversions (e.g., Boston Pilot Schools Network).

**Coaching frequency:** Frequency varies between 10 to 40 on-site days per year depending on the needs of the school, with the preferred amount being 30+ days.

**PROGRAM: CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

**Contact information:** University of Washington  
9709 Third Avenue NE, Suite 306  
Seattle, WA 98115  
(206) 221-6881  
(206) 221-6774 (fax)

**Website:** <http://depts.washington.edu/uwcel/>

**General description of coaching:** The Center for Educational Leadership (CEL), a non-profit organization with a mission of social justice and equity for all students, trains school leaders in the instructional leadership and values needed to eliminate the achievement gap. CEL's School Leadership Programs are designed for principals, assistant principals and district administrators and include four distinct, year-long programs, along with a week-long summer leadership institute. Through seminars, coaching, and mentoring, school leaders focus on developing a deeper understanding of powerful instruction along with the leadership necessary to lead an instructional improvement agenda. CEL has also developed a Center-District Partnership Program in which CEL coaches work closely with whole districts to improve school and district leadership. Through this extended relationship, CEL helps districts define the instructional practices, structures, and routines that are conducive to powerful student learning, along with the leadership practices necessary to improve instruction in every school and in every classroom.

**Grades served:** K-12

**Sources of funding:** Fees for service

**Examples of work:** CEL works primarily with Washington State schools and districts. Center-District Partnership Program districts include Anchorage School District, Alaska; Highline School District, Washington; Tacoma School District, Washington; Norwalk-LaMirada School District, California.

**Cost:** School Leadership Programs I, II, & III: \$1,755 - \$2,457  
Center-District Partnership Program: Cost varies depending on the needs and characteristics of the district.

**Coaching frequency:** School Leadership Programs: 5-7 two-day seminars per year.  
Center-District Partnership Program: Depends on the needs of the district but at a minimum, monthly study group sessions for all administrators along with one or more days of coaching for follow-up and application.



**PROGRAM: CENTER FOR SCHOOL CHANGE**

<b>Contact information:</b>	Hubert H. Humphrey Institute for Public Affairs University of Minnesota 301 19 <sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Room 234 Minneapolis, MN 55455 (612) 626-1834 (612) 625-0104 (fax)
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/school-change/">www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/school-change/</a>
<b>General description of coaching:</b>	<p>The Center for School Change (CSC), a non-profit organization that is a part of the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, works with educators, parents, businesses, students, and policy-makers to increase student achievement, raise graduation rates, improve student attitudes, and strengthen communities.</p> <p>The nature of CSC coaching varies depending on the project and the needs of the schools. Coaching services may include helping schools develop and carry out work plans, convening schools to learn from each other and outside experts, arranging meetings with outside experts, connecting schools to business authorities in fields such as strategic planning and personnel management, and advocating for schools.</p>
<b>Grades served:</b>	K-12
<b>Sources of funding:</b>	Multiple funders, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Cargill Corporation, the Blandin Foundation, the Annenberg Foundation, U.S. Department of Education, the University of Minnesota, the Minnesota Initiative Fund, the Joyce Foundation, the Bradley Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation.
<b>Examples of work:</b>	CSC works with district elementary, middle and high schools in urban, suburban, and rural locations, as well as charter schools in urban, suburban, and rural areas. CSC projects include <i>Gates High Schools</i> , <i>Rural Minnesota Schools</i> , and <i>Cargill Schools First</i> .
<b>Cost:</b>	No cost to schools.
<b>Coaching frequency:</b>	The frequency of coaching services varies according to the project and needs of the school. CSC coaching may take occur as frequently as daily.

**PROGRAM: CHANGE LEADERSHIP GROUP**

**Contact information:** Harvard Graduate School of Education  
8 Story Street, 1st floor  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
(617) 496-6702

**Website:** [www.clg.harvard.edu](http://www.clg.harvard.edu)

**General description of coaching:** The Change Leadership Group (CLG), a non-profit organization at Harvard University, was developed to address the “persistent inequities” that exist in how students are educated. CLG facilitates the transformation of schools through a developmental approach to the change process. CLG works with groups of “change leaders” in districts through a variety of programs:

- Three-Day Learning Lab - designed to create an awareness of the change process and to encourage participants to *think systemically*.
- Change Leadership Program - a two-year program intended primarily for superintendent-led teams who are committed to working for systemic change in a school district.
- Partnership programs with districts in which CLG staff work with district staff over the course of several years to implement comprehensive, district-wide change.

**Grades served:** K-12

**Sources of funding:** The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

**Examples of work:** Houston Independent School District; Grand Rapids, Michigan School District; West Clermont, Ohio School District.

**Cost:** Three-Day Learning Lab: \$745 per person for 3 days  
Change Leadership Program: \$10,000 per person for 2 years or \$25,000 per year for teams of three or more.

The cost to CLG partnership districts varies according to the needs of the district.

**Coaching frequency:** Participants of the Change Leadership Program visit CLG at Harvard twice a year for one week. They also maintain contact with CLG staff via phone and e-mail throughout the year. Districts involved with CLG in a more intensive partnerships visit Harvard once a year and receive visits from CLG staff more frequently.

**PROGRAM: COLORADO SMALL SCHOOLS INITIATIVE**

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**Contact information:** 1120 Lincoln Street, Suite 125  
Denver, CO 80203  
(303) 839-1580  
(303) 839-1354 (fax)

**Website:** [www.coloradosmallschools.org](http://www.coloradosmallschools.org)

**General description of coaching:** The Colorado Small Schools Initiative (CSSI) was established to administer and oversee grants given by the Colorado Children's Coalition, a non-profit organization advocating for children's health and education. CSSI awards grants for several different purposes and provides coaching assistance based on the nature of the grant. Specifically, CSSI supports high school reform by awarding grants for large high school conversions, high technology high schools, and high performing small high school networks. Coaching support is offered at several different levels, including:

- The cultivation of political climate for small school reform at local, district, and state levels.
- Professional learning opportunities and resources.
- Opening new schools.
- Hiring assistance for small high schools.
- Instructional coaching.
- Leadership coaching.

Specific tasks of CSSI coaches include examining student work with teachers; pre-conferencing, observing, and post-conferencing with teachers to analyze a particular lesson; modeling a new strategy for a teacher; sharing results of a school survey and planning for change based on the data; and assisting in the development of an aligned, well-articulated curriculum and assessment system.

**Grades served:** High school

**Sources of funding:** Multiple funders, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Daniels Fund, the Colorado Trust, and the Denver Foundation.

**Examples of work:** CSSI works with public, private, and charter high schools in Colorado. CSSI supports both start-up and conversion schools.

**Cost:** No cost to schools. Schools receive services through a CSSI grant.

**Coaching frequency:** The frequency of coaching varies for each school.

**PROGRAM: CONNECTICUT CENTER FOR SCHOOL CHANGE**

**Contact information:** 151 New Park Avenue, Suite 203  
Hartford, CT 06106  
(860) 586-2340  
(860) 586-7360 (fax)

**Website:** [www.ctschoolchange.org](http://www.ctschoolchange.org)

**General description of coaching:** The Connecticut Center for School Change (CCSC) is a statewide, intermediary, non-profit organization with a mission to improve teaching and learning. CCSC focuses on school districts as the unit of change. CCSC provides financial support, technical assistance and coaching to districts working on multi-year systemic reform efforts; offers leadership development programs; and researches and formulates public policy options for state and local appointed and elected officials.

Connecticut districts that apply for and are awarded CCSC's *Systemic Instructional Improvement Program* grants receive financial support, coaching and technical assistance. As coaches, CCSC staff are external partners, critical friends and advisors who support the district's efforts to build strong instructional leadership, maintain a clear focus on academic achievement, align curriculum with assessments, collect and evaluate data on student progress, and facilitate teacher collaboration focused on student learning and teaching practice. Coaching involves:

- Regular meetings with district leaders (central office, building, and staff) as a critical friend: raising questions, challenging performance
- Ongoing participation in meetings and planning sessions to model tools and effective improvement strategies
- Encouraging and guiding evaluation and documentation
- Connecting district teams and personnel to useful resources: finding experts, recommending research

**Grades served:** K-12

**Sources of funding:** The William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, Smart Family Foundation, Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust, the J. P. Morgan Chase Foundation, and other corporate and private philanthropies.

**Examples of work:** CCSC works with Connecticut schools, at least 50% of which have been identified by the State Department of Education as the neediest.

**Cost:** No cost to schools. Recipients apply for grants from CCSC.

**Coaching frequency:** Coaches work in grantee districts at least one day per week.

**PROGRAM:   DIFFERENT WAYS OF KNOWING**

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**Contact information:**       The Galef Institute  
3240 Ocean Park Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90405  
(310) 581-3100  
(800) 473-8883  
(310) 581-3851 (fax)

**Website:**               [www.differentways.org](http://www.differentways.org)

**General description of coaching:**       The Galef Institute, a non-profit organization, offers a range of educational consulting services to “*provide schools and districts with research-based tools, services, and partnerships that dramatically increase their capacity to reach and exceed AYP targets and for students to develop their full potential*” ([www.differentways.org](http://www.differentways.org)). The purpose of Different Ways of Knowing coaching services is to model and facilitate:

1. the norms of adult collaboration
2. school wide practices in standards- and data-based curriculum, assessment, and instruction
3. integration of the visual, performing and media arts
4. conversations for producing breakthroughs in attitudes, beliefs, practices
5. instructional leadership for results

Coaching is delivered through the teacher course of study; grade level content area and one-on-one coaching sessions; teacher leadership sessions; school-based summer institutes; national coaches training institutes; national leadership institutes; and on-line coaching services

**Grades served:**       K-12

**Sources of funding:**       The Galef Institute is funded by federal contracts, grants and fees for service.

**Examples of work:**       Different Ways of Knowing is in partnership with schools, districts, and charter schools in 23 states and over 600 schools. Schools are located in large urban (NYC, Detroit, LA, Miami), medium urban (Portland, Louisville, Pittsburgh), and rural (Montana, Mississippi, Alaska) areas.

**Cost:**               Contracts with schools for delivery of services range from \$50,000 to \$150,000 per year.

**Coaching frequency:**       Depending on the size, schools receive from 30 to 100 days of coaching assistance per year.

<b>PROGRAM: EDVISIONS COOPERATIVE</b>	
<b>Contact information:</b>	P.O. Box 518 501 Main Street Henderson, MN 56044 (507) 248-3738 (507) 248-3789 (fax)
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.edvisions.coop">www.edvisions.coop</a>
<b>General description of coaching:</b>	<p>EdVisions Cooperative was established to provide instructional services to the Minnesota New Country School. The cooperative, made up of teachers from the New Country School and other educational professionals, provide coaching and services to a network of 22 operating small schools in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Charter school planning and development</li><li>• Direct instructional services</li><li>• Payroll, benefit and fiscal services</li><li>• Teacher preparation, professional development, and staff development</li><li>• Academic, personnel, and program evaluation</li><li>• Customized charter school workshops</li><li>• Fiscal hosts for grants and contracts</li><li>• Technical assistance for charter school start-up</li><li>• Project-based high school model replication</li><li>• Technology use evaluation</li><li>• Grant-writing services</li></ul>
<b>Grades served:</b>	Middle and High schools
<b>Sources of funding:</b>	The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Center for School Change, federal grants.
<b>Examples of work:</b>	There are currently 15 EdVisions schools in Minnesota and Wisconsin based on the Minnesota New Country School. EdVisions anticipates working with 20 new sites across the United States to replicate the EdVisions approach.
<b>Cost:</b>	No cost to schools. Schools apply for grants from EdVisions.
<b>Coaching frequency:</b>	The frequency of coaching varies according to the needs of each school, but generally occurs once a month.

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**PROGRAM: EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING**

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<b>Contact information:</b>	Outward Bound USA 100 Mystery Point Road Garrison, NY 10524 (845) 424-4000 (845) 424-4280 (fax)
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.elob.org">www.elob.org</a>
<b>General description of coaching:</b>	<p><i>“Expeditionary Learning (EL) is a model for comprehensive school reform for elementary, middle, and high schools that emphasizes high achievement through active learning, character growth, and teamwork.”</i> EL provides professional development and coaching to help teachers <i>“teach subjects through a challenging set of connected, real-world projects called learning expeditions”</i> (<a href="http://www.elob.org">www.elob.org</a>). The purpose of coaching is to help the school move forward in the EL design. EL coaches connect with the school for a long-term relationship. EL provides on-site coaching as well as professional development, including an annual two- or three-day institute focusing school leadership on the structural and cultural components of EL; an annual five-day summer institute; and regional and school-based events scheduled throughout the school year. Events may cover topics such as authentic assessment, critique of expedition plans, teaching methods, and classroom management. EL coaches help schools align their learning expeditions with state standards, adapt instructional strategies compatible with the EL design, and use portfolios, rubrics and other elements of authentic assessment. EL coaches also model active learning pedagogies in the classroom, provide technical assistance in the school review process, and meet with the leadership team to discuss issues of school culture and structure.</p>
<b>Grades served:</b>	K-12
<b>Sources of funding:</b>	Fees for service Federal grants and contracts
<b>Examples of work:</b>	Expeditionary Learning currently works in 29 states with small, medium, and large schools. Most are low income, urban schools.
<b>Cost:</b>	The average cost is \$75,000 per year for the first 3 to 5 years, and then \$15,000 - \$25,000 for each subsequent year. The cost varies according to school size.
<b>Coaching frequency:</b>	30 days on-site per year.

**PROGRAM: FIRST THINGS FIRST**

**Contact information:** Institute for Research and Reform in Education (IRRE)  
1420 Locust Street, Suite 7Q  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
(215) 545-1335  
(215) 545-3194 (fax)

**Website:** <http://www.irre.org/>

**General description of coaching:** IRRE, a non-profit organization, works with schools and districts to implement the First Things First (FTF) education reform initiative. The goal of FTF is to raise all students' academic performance to levels required for post-secondary education and high quality employment. The role of IRRE is to guide school, district, and community stakeholders through a structured and participatory process toward implementation of the framework in participating schools within one year. During this year and beyond, IRRE assists with the mechanics and human dynamics of implementation; builds the capacity of instructional coaches, supervisors and content area leaders to help teachers improve student engagement around rigorous work aligned with standards and high stakes assessments; and helps schools build relationships with families through implementation of the Family Advocate System. FTF professional development activities also focus on building literacy and math skills through use of supplemental curricula, infusion of thematic/career content, and use of reflection and action planning to improve instruction. Additional training is provided to instructional leaders and teachers in the use of Measuring What Matters – a process and set of tools for collecting and using data on student outcomes and quality of implementation to improve practice. IRRE also helps build the capacity of existing and emerging district and school leaders to support the reform process.

**Grades served:** K-12

**Sources of funding:** School districts  
Private Foundations (e.g., E.M. Kauffman Foundation)  
Federal government

**Examples of work:** Kansas City, Kansas; Houston, Texas; Greenville, Mississippi; Shaw, Mississippi; New Orleans, Louisiana

**Cost:** Planning Year: \$90,000 - \$150,000  
Implementation Year One: \$70,000 - \$80,000  
Implementation Year Two and Beyond: \$50,000

**Coaching frequency:** Planning Year: Varies; coaches are on-site almost weekly.  
Implementation Year(s): 50 to 100 days per year



<b>PROGRAM:</b>	<b>HIGH/SCOPE EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION</b>
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<b>Contact information:</b>	600 North River Street Ypsilanti, MI 48198 (734) 485-2000 (734) 485-0704 (fax)
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<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.highscope.org">www.highscope.org</a>
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<b>General description of coaching:</b>	High/Scope Educational Research Foundation is an independent, non-profit research, development, training, and public advocacy organization with the mission to improve the life chances of children and youth by promoting high-quality educational programs.
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Coaching is centered around elements that High/Scope feels are crucial to children's education and success, called Key Experiences. There are Key Experiences in Math, Literacy, Social Relations, Movement, Music, Creative Representation and more. Coaches provide in-service training to a group of teachers and provide follow-up observation and feedback. It is during the observation/feedback session that the true coaching occurs. Teachers get immediate feedback on their strategies and plans are continually made to ensure their success.

<b>Grades served:</b>	Pre K-12
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<b>Sources of funding:</b>	Fees for service Government and private grants
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<b>Examples of work:</b>	High/Scope works with numerous educational programs and schools, including Head Start, Title-1 programs, private child care centers, Early Head Start, Even Start, public school preschool, public school primary grades, alternative high school programs, traditional high school programs.
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<b>Cost:</b>	The cost varies based on several factors. One method is for the High/Scope coach to work with a group of 15 teachers for as long as they like. The fee is \$950 per day plus travel and materials expenses.
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<b>Coaching frequency:</b>	Varies according to the needs of those being coached. Usually 20 days plus 2-5 days of teacher observation and feedback.
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**PROGRAM: THE LEARNING NETWORK**

**Contact information:** Richard C. Owen Publishers, Inc.  
P.O. Box 585  
Katonah, NY 10536  
(800) 262-0787  
(914) 232-3977 (fax)

**Website:** [www.rcowen.com](http://www.rcowen.com)

**General description of coaching:** The Learning Network (TLN) is an in-depth and on-going staff development program for helping teachers to learn more effective teaching practices and for helping schools to organize for more effective teaching and learning through assessment, evaluation, planning, and teaching.

The Learning Network focuses on literacy and uses classroom observation, action plans, and instructional dialogue to train teachers to use effective teaching practices. The Learning Network coordinator (coach) works with the principal and a group of teacher leaders over a two-year period. During the first year, TLN trains two school-based teacher leaders and makes monthly on-site visits to the school, observing the teacher leaders in the classroom and engaging them in instructional dialog. During the second year, the teacher leaders work with other teachers in the same way, with support from the TLN coordinator.

**Grades served:** K-12

**Sources of funding:** Fees for service

**Examples of work:** TLN has worked with schools in Colorado, Washington, Indiana, Kansas, California, Montana, Idaho, Illinois, Michigan, Iowa, Florida, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Oregon.

**Cost:** The cost of the TLN coordinator is \$12,000 per year for the first two years. Summer institutes and leadership seminars are extra.

**Coaching frequency:** TLN coordinators spend one day a month on-site during the first two years. In addition, schools hold TLN focus groups once per month during Year 2, once with a TLN coordinator and once without. During Year 3 and beyond, TLN coordinators have a maximum of four on-site days per year in the school.

<b>PROGRAM:</b>	<b>MASS INSIGHT EDUCATION AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE</b>
<b>Contact information:</b>	18 Tremont Street, Suite 930 Boston, MA 02108 (617) 722-4160 (617) 722-4151 (fax)
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.massinsight.org">www.massinsight.org</a>
<b>General description of coaching:</b>	<p>Mass Insight, a non-profit organization, focuses on improving student achievement in Massachusetts' public schools through public outreach initiatives, school leadership training programs, and public opinion and policy reports. Mass Insight's primary goal is to "<i>raise academic achievement for all students, including those who have been trapped in a cycle of low expectations. To meet this goal, Mass Insight Education and its Coalition for Higher Standards work in three areas: (1) public outreach, (2) strengthening schools, and (3) policy</i>" (<a href="http://www.massinsight.org">www.massinsight.org</a>).</p> <p>Through its various initiatives, Mass Insight uses coaching to help schools build capacity and resources in the areas of math achievement, effective staff and leadership development, effective use of data and assessment, and effective student intervention and academic support. Both internal and external coaches focus on both management and leadership development as well as content coaching, especially in math.</p>
<b>Grades served:</b>	K-8
<b>Sources of funding:</b>	Mass Insight receives funding through fees for service, grants, and corporate sponsors, including the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, Fleet, Alliance for Better Schools, the Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation, and Washington Mutual.
<b>Examples of work:</b>	Mass Insight works with Massachusetts Public Schools, focusing on low income and urban schools.
<b>Cost:</b>	The cost of Mass Insight's services varies according to the needs and characteristics of the school.
<b>Coaching frequency:</b>	The frequency of coaching services varies according to the services for and needs of the school.

**PROGRAM:   MICROSOCIETY**

**Contact information:**       13 South Third Street, Suite 500  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
(215) 922-4006  
(215) 922-3303 (fax)

**Website:**               [www.microsociety.org](http://www.microsociety.org)

**General description of coaching:**       MicroSociety, a non-profit organization, offers a variety of programs that fully integrate into a school's daily curriculum. Its whole-school improvement model establishes a fully functioning society within the school in which all of the school's students take roles in running that world. Students run and work in a legislature, court system, peacekeeping, government agencies, businesses, and nonprofit organizations.

A set of principles developed by MicroSociety over the past three decades include shared power and responsibility among students and teachers, curriculum and instruction that are relevant to children's lives and that engage stakeholders, and leadership and management structures and assessments. Coaches teach and model the tools and strategies needed to become facilitators and consultants to students and other stakeholders in their learning communities. Systematic communication and organizational structures are embedded in MicroSociety programs for easy, long-term sustainability. Coaching includes large and small group training, in-class observation and mentoring, and one-on-one technical assistance and guidance.

**Grades served:**       Pre K-9

**Sources of funding:**       Fees for service, grants, and donations.

**Examples of work:**       MicroSociety works in urban, exurban, and suburban areas.

**Cost:**               On-site training and coaching services range from \$2,000 to \$6,000 per visit for a one to three day session provided by one trainer. This fee includes an equal number of follow-up off-site consultation and technical assistance days.

**Coaching frequency:**       MicroSociety offers one-time technical assistance when asked. A typical relationship with a school involves 10 to 15 days of on-site work over the school year with an equal number of off-site consultation days.

**PROGRAM: MIDDLE START**

**Contact information:** Academy for Educational Development  
100 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10011  
(212) 243-1110  
(212) 627-0407 (fax)

**Website:** [www.middlestart.org](http://www.middlestart.org)

**General description of coaching:** Middle Start was established by the Academy of Educational Development, a non-profit organization, and several collaborators, in 1994. *“Middle Start is a comprehensive reform program for schools with middle grades. It combines on-site support to schools with the development of regional partnerships of schools and local organizations. A Middle Start coach works with a school leadership team to guide the school through the improvement process, while the regional partnership brings together service agencies, universities, advocacy groups, and institutions to build capacity for continuous school improvement”* ([www.middlestart.org](http://www.middlestart.org)).

Coaches focus primarily on helping schools in four areas:

1. Developing small learning communities
2. Aligning instruction and student assessment with rigorous curriculum
3. Undertaking reflective review and self-assessment
4. Distributing leadership

**Grades served:** Middle grades in schools of all grade configurations.

**Sources of funding:** Fees for service  
Public education funding  
Federal funding  
Foundation grants

**Examples of work:** Middle Start works primarily with low-income populations. Schools are located in urban and rural areas.

**Cost:** Some schools are foundation or state grant funded, in which case there is no cost to the schools. For fees for service schools, the cost varies according to the size and geography of the school - \$50,000 to \$175,000 per year.

**Coaching frequency:** The frequency of coaching services varies. Generally, coaches are on-site 16 to 40 days per year. Larger schools may receive up to 50 days of on-site coaching a year. All schools receive an additional 10 days of off-site coaching each year.

**PROGRAM: MODERN RED SCHOOLHOUSE**

**Contact information:** 1901 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue South  
Nashville, TN 37212  
(888) 275-6774, ext. 17  
(615) 320-5366 (fax)

**Website:** [www.mrsh.org](http://www.mrsh.org)

**General description of coaching:** Modern Red Schoolhouse (MRSH), a non-profit organization, provides coaches to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of individual staff members and identify school-wide trends. In consultation with the staff, coaches develop a work plan to address weaknesses. Strategies used by MRSH coaches include classroom modeling, individual observations with feedback sessions, establishing peer observation schedules, developing internal study groups, and providing small and large group professional development sessions to address common needs. Progress is evaluated by MRSH benchmarks or appropriate district tools, providing data to adjust the ongoing coaching efforts.

MRSH believes all coaching activities should improve the capacity of educators to develop effective instructional practices that focus on state and district expectations. Coaching activities must address the unique strengths and weaknesses of a school as perceived by those being coached. Coaches must be experts who develop long-term relationships and a sense of trust with those they are serving. Finally, the coaching process must foster a culture of reflective practices to establish personal improvement as an ongoing, internal process.

**Grades served:** K-12

**Sources of funding:** Fees for services, grants

**Examples of work:** MRSH works with urban, suburban, and rural districts, in low, average, and high performing schools.

**Cost:** Coaching services are customized according to needs. Pricing is determined by the number of days of on-site coaching and the number of staff served.

**Coaching frequency:** The implementation of the MRSH design involves an average of 25 days of on-site professional development.

**PROGRAM: ONWARD TO EXCELLENCE II (OTE II)**

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**Contact information:** Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory  
101 SW Main Street, Suite 500  
Portland, OR 97204  
(503) 275-9615  
(503) 275-9621 (fax)

**Website:** [www.nwrel.org](http://www.nwrel.org)

**General description of coaching:** The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL), a non-profit organization, created OTE II regional centers in partnerships with AEL, SEKESC, SERVE, and WestEd. The purpose of OTE II coaching is to build school staff and stakeholder capacity to engage in continuous school improvement for increased student achievement. OTE II is a process model of school improvement with training sessions scheduled for two to three years.

The OTE II Trainers develop an initial database on each school, maintain active dialogues with their schools, monitor progress, and support and encourage their schools to implement the OTE II process fully. Knowing schools well, building a supportive relationship with the Site Facilitator, principal, and other key staff, and staying in frequent touch are some of the major responsibilities of the OTE II trainer/coach. The OTE II process invites all key stakeholders to become involved in school improvement so that everyone is committed to a goal and course of action. Coaches teach schools how to use student achievement data to make informed decisions and teachers are supported in the change process. As teachers and the leadership teamwork together, a learning community develops that carries the improvement effort forward beyond the OTE II training cycle.

**Grades served:** K-12

**Sources of funding:** NWREL is funded by a combination of federal research and development contracts and fees for services.

**Examples of work:** OTE II provides services to rural, urban, large, and small districts and schools.

**Cost:** The total fees for service plus trainer travel costs is generally \$54,000 paid over three years. A travel surcharge is added for schools that are located far from the regional centers. Centers may deviate somewhat from this fee and the basis for a travel surcharge depending on local operating costs.

**Coaching frequency:** Sixteen training sessions are included in the OTE II schedule of services, with technical assistance provided as school needs arise.

**PROGRAM: PAIDEIA**

**Contact information:** National Paideia Center  
400 Silver Cedar Court, Suite 200  
Chapel Hill, NC 27514  
(919) 962 3128  
(919) 962 3139 (fax)

**Website:** [www.paideia.org](http://www.paideia.org)

**General description of coaching:** The National Paideia Center, a non-profit organization, “*fosters active lifelong learning and respectful, democratic dialogue.*” Paideia works with schools to “*incorporate collaborative discussion and intellectual coaching into the lives of students and adults*” ([www.paideia.org](http://www.paideia.org)). Whole school implementation of the Paideia Program begins with a period of inquiry and preparation and is followed by three annual “phases” of training and technical assistance. Training includes experiencing, planning, and assessing the Paideia Seminar; defining intellectual coaching and planning the Coached Project; developing a strategic plan for school-side implementation; and identifying and practicing student-centered assessments.

Paideia coaches work with schools to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and to improve critical thinking and communication skills. Coaching activities include teaching demonstration lessons in the classroom and coaching leadership (i.e., the implementation team, the program facilitator, the principal).

**Grades served:** K-12

**Sources of funding:** Fees for service  
Grants

**Examples of work:** Paideia has worked with schools in North Carolina, Louisiana, New York, Tennessee, Colorado, Nevada, New Jersey, Ohio, Florida, Wisconsin, and Washington.

**Cost:** Paideia charges a flat rate of \$2,000 per day, including travel and consulting fees.

**Coaching frequency:** Coaching typically occurs one day per month, or eight to ten days per year. Schools also send a team to the annual Paideia conference and may participate in the Paideia Implementation and Leadership Institutes during the summer.



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**PROGRAM: RE-INVENTING SCHOOLS COALITION**

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**Contact information:** 9312 Vanguard Drive, Suite 100  
Anchorage, AK 99507  
(907) 522-3132  
(907) 522-3399 (fax)

**Website:** [www.reinventingschools.org](http://www.reinventingschools.org)

**General description of coaching:** The Re-Inventing Schools Coalition (RISC), a non-profit organization, helps create a system that is standard-driven and performance-based to help all children achieve. The system is built on a foundation of 7 components: (1) shared vision; (2) leadership; (3) standards; (4) appropriate instructional strategies; (5) assessments tied to standards, (6) reporting student progress; and (7) sustainability/continuous improvement.

The purpose of coaching is to assist districts in implementing the “Quality Schools Model” that changes educational practices in a systemic manner. Whenever possible, coaching is provided on-site and coaches work to build schools’ internal capacity so they are not consultant dependent. RISC coaching services include on site, audio, video conferencing, web-based, and paper. The goal of the coaching is to provide enough direct and indirect instruction to assist districts in getting the QSM started, then allow coaching to be taken over by the district once a core of coaches from within have been trained. On-going support continues for a minimum of five years, with formal and informal training.

**Grades served:** K-12

**Sources of funding:** The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation  
Federal grants  
Fees for service

**Examples of work:** RISC works with large and small, urban and rural districts in Alaska.

**Cost:** There is no cost to schools receiving grant funding (e.g., Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation). Fees for service range from \$300 to \$500 per day.

**Coaching frequency:** The frequency of coaching varies according to the needs of the school. The minimum is 4 times per year with two audio conferences each month, and in-services and on-site deliverables as needed.

**PROGRAM: SMALL SCHOOLS COACHES COLLABORATIVE**

<b>Contact information:</b>	Small Schools Project 7900 East Greenlake Drive North, Suite 212 Seattle, WA 98103 (206) 616-0303 (206) 543-8250 (fax)
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.smallschoolsproject.org">www.smallschoolsproject.org</a>
<b>General description of coaching:</b>	<p>The Small Schools Project, a non-profit University of Washington organization, provides support for schools that receive reinvention grants from the Bill &amp; Melinda Gates Foundation. The Small Schools Coaches Collaborative helps schools by providing an outside perspective, management advice, assistance with data analysis, connections to other schools, insights on teaching and learning practices, insights on how to plan for change, facilitation during meetings, assistance with addressing issues of bias and equity, and ideas about how to engage the community.</p> <p>There are currently over 40 SSCC coaches working in more than 100 Washington State schools. Through a process-oriented model of support, coaches facilitate the work of schools as they strive to achieve their goals. SSCC focuses on six aspects of coaching: (1) building a professional learning community, (2) equity, (3) teaching and learning, (4) distributed leadership, (5) community engagement, and (6) design and structure.</p>
<b>Grades served:</b>	K-12
<b>Sources of funding:</b>	The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
<b>Examples of work:</b>	SSCC works primarily with schools in Washington State that receive reinvention grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.
<b>Cost:</b>	No cost to schools. Services provided to schools receiving Gates Foundation grants.
<b>Coaching frequency:</b>	Coaches provide about 30 days of on-site service per year. Most SSCC coaches spend one day a week in the school, although some may spend two to four days a week at the school, once or twice a month.

**PROGRAM: SOUTHERN MAINE PARTNERSHIP**

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**Contact information:** University of Southern Maine  
37 College Avenue  
Gorham, ME 04038  
(207) 780-5498  
(207) 228-8209 (fax)

**Website:** [www.usm.maine.edu/smp](http://www.usm.maine.edu/smp)

**General description of coaching:** In order to “*fulfill the promise of public education through promoting equity for all learners now and in the future,*” the Southern Maine Partnership works toward four specific goals: (1) Classroom Practice; (2) Organizational Design of Schools and Districts; (3) Community Connections; and (4) Leadership. The Partnership accomplishes these goals through three broad strategies including *networking, applied assistance, and research, development, and dissemination.*

Southern Maine Partnership coaches serve schools in a number of different ways including, among others, providing assistance in:

- Writing action plans
- Facilitating leadership team and faculty meetings
- Making presentations to school boards, community, and parent groups
- Planning and designing assessment programs
- Facilitating professional development activities
- Planning and presenting at conferences and forums

**Grades served:** Middle and high school

**Sources of funding:** Sources of funding include grants, contracts, and membership dues.

**Examples of work:** The Southern Maine Partnership works with schools across the state of Maine. Partnership members currently include 36 public school districts, two private schools, and the University of Southern Maine.

**Cost:** Cost of services varies. Some schools receive coaching services from SMP which are covered through grant funds; others pay a yearly fee for contracted coaching and related professional development services.

**Coaching frequency:** Frequency of coaching varies based on the particular grant and on individual school circumstances. Typically, a school is guaranteed a minimum of 44.5 on-site days per year.

**PROGRAM: SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD**

**Contact information:** 592 10th Street N.W.  
Atlanta, GA 30318  
(404) 875-9211

**Website:** [www.sreb.org](http://www.sreb.org)

**General description of coaching:** The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), a non-profit organization, works to improve education through a variety of initiatives, primarily *High Schools That Work (HSTW)* and *Making Middle Grades Work*. HSTW is the largest and oldest of SREB's school-improvement initiatives for high school and middle grade leaders and teachers. All initiatives strive to prepare students for careers and further education by improving curriculum and instruction in high school and middle grades.

SREB coaching provides school leaders and teachers with technical assistance in planning and implementing school improvement plans based on SREB's ten key practices: *high expectations, vocational studies, academic studies, program of study, work-based learning, teachers working together, students actively engaged, guidance, extra help, and keeping score*. Coaches develop plans in advance of each visit with school leaders to focus on the specific needs for that visit. Follow-up reports provide anecdotal information to schools on the visit and offer next steps for the schools. Coaches provide guidance and support to address the specific needs of a school. The initiatives are not prescriptive; rather, the coaching changes focus and design with every visit.

**Grades served:** *High Schools that Work* focuses on grades 9-12; *Making Middle Grades Work* focuses on grades 6-8.

**Sources of funding:** Funded primarily by federal and foundation grants, including the Wallace Foundation and Carnegie Foundation.

**Examples of work:** SREB works with rural, suburban and urban sites in the Southern United States. HSTW is active in 32 states with the following states all having a state director that is typically a part of the Department of Education within that state: Texas, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Oklahoma, Alabama, Arkansas, West Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Virginia.

**Cost:** School contracts generally average \$30,000 per year.

**Coaching frequency:** Approximately one day per month.

<b>PROGRAM:</b>	<b>SWANSON &amp; COSGRAVE CONSULTING</b>
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**Contact information:** 27965 Crossley Lane  
Eugene, Oregon 97405  
(541) 689-3565  
(530) 753-4477

**Website:** [www.swansonandcosgrave.com](http://www.swansonandcosgrave.com)

**General description of coaching:** Swanson and Cosgrave Consulting provides coaching, training, and design to schools and educational organizations. Areas of specialty include:

- School reform coaching
- Small school and small learning community design and implementation
- Curricular design in project-based learning
- Training in research-based instructional strategies

**Grades served:** Coaches work primarily in grades 9-12.

**Sources of funding:** Swanson and Cosgrave Consulting is funded through contracts.

**Examples of work:** Coaching services are provided to individual schools and districts, local and national organizations, and to teams planning for new school start-ups.

**Cost:** Fees are based on a daily rate plus expenses and vary based on individual needs and circumstances. Daily rates include preparation and follow-up costs.

**Coaching frequency:** The frequency of coaching services varies based on the needs of a given organization, district, or school. The coaching work is deeply rooted in their core beliefs about what works best for students, schools and communities. It is their goal to:

- Develop long-term relationships
- Personalize and customize strategies to meet local needs
- Assist in the development of useful products and processes

**PROGRAM: TALENT DEVELOPMENT HIGH SCHOOLS**

**Contact information:** Center for Social Organization of Schools  
Johns Hopkins University  
3003 N. Charles Street, Suite 200  
Baltimore, MD 21218  
(410) 516-8800  
(410) 516-8890 (fax)

**Website:** [www.csos.jhu.edu/tdhs/](http://www.csos.jhu.edu/tdhs/)

**General description of coaching:** *“The Talent Development High School Model (TDHS) is a comprehensive reform model for large high schools facing serious problems with student attendance, discipline, achievement scores, and dropout rates”* ([www.csos.jhu.edu/tdhs/](http://www.csos.jhu.edu/tdhs/)). TDHS schools receive two tiers of coaching support. The first tier consists of local, on-site coaches - typically one math, one English, one Freshmen Seminar, and one organizational facilitator. The second tier of coaching support consists of technical assistance visits from TDHS instructional and organizational facilitators. In these visits, TDHS facilitators provide teacher-training sessions, support and additional training to local coaches, conduct implementation reviews, and troubleshoot implementation. TDHS coaches provide teachers with non-evaluative implementation support, including modeling, observation and feedback, and working together to customize approaches to each teacher’s classroom. Coaches also help troubleshoot implementation roadblocks and provide feedback to TDHS about what is working and what is not.

**Grades served:** High school grades 9 through 11.

**Sources of funding:** Fees for service

**Examples of work:** TDHS is working with about 50 high schools in 20 school districts, including Chicago; New Orleans; Kansas City, MO; Philadelphia; Chattanooga, TN; and Hawaii.

**Cost:** The cost is usually \$25,000 - \$30,000 per year for technical assistance, plus the cost of one to two FTE teaching positions per school (depending on the size) for on-site coaches.

**Coaching frequency:** Teachers implementing a TDHS instructional course receive at least one class period a week of coaching support plus a follow-up debriefing period. TDHS instructional and organizational facilitators visit schools roughly once per month for one day.

<b>PROGRAM:</b>	<b>VENTURES EDUCATION SYSTEMS CORPORATION</b>
<b>Contact information:</b>	15 Maiden Lane, Suite 200 New York, NY 10038 (212) 566-2522 (800) 947-6278 (212) 566-2536 (fax)
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.vesc-education.com">www.vesc-education.com</a>
<b>General description of coaching:</b>	<p>Ventures Education Systems Corporation (VESC) provides student-centered, research-based methodology to improve students' literacy, analytical reasoning and problem-solving skills. VESC coaching services provide on-site workshops and in-class coaching. During the in-class coaching, VESC coaches work with teachers, modeling, coaching, or team teaching. On-site visits with teachers provide additional opportunities to interact by planning lessons, examining student work, and facilitating at grade-level or subject-area meetings. Coaches also assist in the gathering and analysis of student data. All aspects of the coaching program are designed to enhance the participants' professional experience and expertise to help students meet rigorous academic standards and prepare them for classroom assessments.</p> <p>VESC coaching services deepen teachers' understanding of literacy, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and classroom management. Additionally, coaching services for building principals and district administrative staff are designed to develop them as instructional leaders who serve as mentors to their teachers, and help coordinate the school or district resources for on-going sustained professional development to improve student learning and performance.</p>
<b>Grades served:</b>	K-12
<b>Sources of funding:</b>	Fees for service
<b>Examples of work:</b>	VESC works in urban, suburban, and rural districts, such as New York City, Los Angeles, New Brunswick (NJ), Rockford, (IL), Cerro Gordo (NC), and the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Montana.
<b>Cost:</b>	Generally, the cost for a six-hour day of coaching is \$2,400 or \$1,200 for a half day (three hours) for one cohort of 25 to 30 educators.
<b>Coaching frequency:</b>	The duration of a typical VESC coaching program is 20–30 days, as a combination of full- and half-days.

## PART IV: CONCLUSIONS

“Capacity building” within districts and schools has become an important element of many school improvement strategies, including the development of the human and social capital needed to make the types of changes necessary for successful school and district reform. This capacity building often includes very specific technical skills, such as the collection, understanding, and use of data. It is also concerned with adult perspectives and beliefs about all aspects of the educational experience, including an understanding about the need for change, the process of change, beliefs about student capabilities, and effective teaching practices. To build this type of internal capacity, schools and districts have employed coaches who serve in a variety of roles. During our work evaluating both school and district reinvention projects around the country we have witnessed coaches functioning as instructional experts, one-on-one mentors for senior district leaders, *de facto* project leaders, group facilitators, and therapists for dysfunctional groups of adults. We recognize the importance of classroom instructional coaching, and there are scores of organizations providing this type of service. However, in this report we have limited our observations to organizations that coach for whole school reform, which sees classroom instruction as a component of larger systems change required in the schools. From this perspective, the role of the coach is to work with district and/or school leadership to build capacity within the system leading to a new professional environment in which the leadership causes change, including instructional improvement.

In first section of this report, we examined the literature on coaching, beginning with various definitions and their relationships to the business model. We then described the major theoretical bases for the beliefs and practices, focusing on cognitive/information processing theory, social interaction learning theory, adult development theory, and organizational theory. We also included a discussion of the importance of constructivist ideas for adult learning and the directive or non-directive nature of the coaching process. We concluded this section of the report with ways in which these ideas are being applied to coaching in the education profession along with the desirable characteristics of individual coaches.

In the second section of this report we described four coaching organizations or programs that we believe reflect a cross-section of coaching activities currently in use. Three of the programs are university-based programs, and one is a district-wide approach to coaching. All have met with some level of success, but each approaches the tasks differently. In the previous section we provided a listing, brief description and contact information for major coaching organizations and programs that focus primarily on district or school-wide coaching for systemic change.

In preparing this report, some of the information we gathered on coaching came through our role as evaluators of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation grants for school and district reinvention. Since 2000, we have visited scores of schools around the country



working with coaches for school improvement. This provided the opportunity to look closely at a number of “technical assistance providers,” as well as to talk directly with those educators receiving the services. In addition, over a two-year period we made direct visits to coaching organizations to meet with coaching leaders and with coaches to discuss their philosophies, approaches and programs and observed actual coaching activities or training when possible. When that was not feasible, we conducted phone interviews with organization leaders and/or coaches, and gathered considerable information about coaching activities from both electronic and hard copy documents. We also made specific visits to schools and districts around the country to see coaches from select organizations in action. Throughout this process, we faced the challenge of bringing organization to a wealth of information that is amorphous and to a field of activity that is fluid and still developing. In spite of this, we offer the following observations and recommendations from our experiences.

**1. “Coaching” is a widely used term applied to a variety professional development functions in schools and districts, and the practice appears to be growing rapidly.**

Its earliest applications were for instructional improvements in the classroom, but now the practice is being extended to personnel at virtually all levels of the educational organization. The move to replace other forms of professional development with coaching relies on various business models, including executive coaching, which is designed specifically for building capacity within a leader for guiding change in an organization, something very important in an educational setting as well. Consequently, in the last decade there have been increasing references to change coaching for school leaders, and more specifically to coaching that supports school reform. This form of coaching can and does take the form of individual coaching for principals, superintendents and other leaders, a type of executive coaching, as well as coaching to work with the entire school. In recent years, “change coaches” or “capacity coaches” have become common as attempts to change or reinvent the entire organization increased. In both instances, “peer coaching” or “expert coaching” is being used, depending on the philosophy of the coaching organization or the need of the group or individual receiving the service. In either role, effective coaches must be knowledgeable about all matters in education including school policy, instructional strategies and curriculum; be able to establish honest and trusting relationships with their clients; and be able to communicate effectively both verbally and in written form.

**2. It is critical that school and district coaches have certain personal qualities and experiences to be successful coaches.**

Our examination of the business and education literature and our interviews with coaching organization personnel revealed a common set of characteristics of successful coaches. Effective coaches must be able to establish their credibility by forming honest and trusting relationships with their clients. They must be able to communicate effectively both verbally and in written form, and they should be well-informed on all matters of education, including school policy, instructional strategies, curriculum, and

special populations. Furthermore, effective coaches have the ability to listen actively and empathetically, and they are skilled at facilitating reflective thinking among teachers. Without such traits and skills, it is doubtful that the coach will contribute meaningfully to the change process. There is some evidence that “youthfulness” puts a coach at a distinct disadvantage.

### **3. The large majority of coaching programs in education appear to be atheoretical in nature.**

During our examination of the literature we were able to locate numerous references to coaching in a variety of articles, the majority of which were “how to” and “the need for” type of articles. In talking with representatives from different coaching organizations, few articulated a theoretical model that serves as the basis of their program. This is not to say that they operate without an underlying philosophy or framework (e.g., social justice, equity); in most cases they do. Still, it was rare that an organization presented a specific theoretical model that structured their coaching work. Consequently, as we examined coaching programs, we attempted to identify a theoretical model, if any, implied by the coaching practices advocated. Oftentimes the coaching appeared to follow an eclectic or “common sense” approach based on an individual’s own experience in a given setting. During our examination of written materials from coaching organizations we could find little in the way of theoretical models guiding such programs. Coaches themselves sometimes commented that they were left to “find their own way” in their work and would have appreciated more direction from the organization.

### **4. In spite of the lack of a clear theoretical model, the actual practices of the vast majority of the coaches from the organizations reflect some type of constructivist or collaborative process.**

We found that although many coaching organizations did not specify the theoretical underpinnings of their programs, coaches were nevertheless using strategies that reflected constructivist or collaborative approaches. Often coaches appeared to be employing these practices more intuitively or by default rather than being the result of a clear set of ideas on adult learning or systems change. On a continuum from non-directive/collegial on one end and directive/expert on the other, many of the coaches and programs appear to be non-directive and process oriented. That is not to say they are never directive, but they see their role primarily as facilitative as opposed to directive, and that perspective guides most of their actions.

### **5. Because of the atheoretical nature of many of the programs and the tendency to be facilitative rather than directive, some of the coaches experience what we call “ambiguous role definition.”**

This is particularly true early in the coaching experience and with new coaches. The coaches are often unsure what tasks they should attempt, and must feel their way through several weeks or months of trying to identify ways in which they can help.

Likewise, district and school personnel often are not sure what role the coach is to play, other than they are there to “help them.” One teacher with whom we talked commented, “People weren’t sure what the coach was supposed to do. It was very open-ended.” The principal stated, “We needed to begin with clearer expectations about coaches and agreement on how coaches see their role.” Another principal added, “It would have been nice to have more structural direction . . . Like, here’s what resources your coach can provide, here’s what she can do, here’s the type of services she can provide.” Eventually, many coaches develop an effective role within the schools, but some do not.

**6. The most effective coaching programs appear to have clearly delineated roles and activities for the coaches, clear expectations about what they are expected to accomplish, and clear agreements with the schools and districts about how the coaches are to be utilized.**

The degree to which this is prevalent among coaching organizations varies considerably, and thus the degree to which coaching activities are being successful varies. It is also important that organizations give particular attention to the assignment of coaches to a given organization. For example, if a coaching organization follows a contingency theory with its emphasis on situational factors to determine appropriate actions, a detailed assessment of a given school or district would take place prior to the assignment of a coach with specific skills appropriate for that situation. In contrast, without a clear theoretical model to drive the coaching expectations and role definition, some organizations assign coaches to schools in a non-strategic manner, such as geographical proximity to the coach’s home, convenient schedule or availability, or simply luck of the draw.

**7. Overall, the effectiveness of current coaching activities varies considerably.**

There are many examples where coaching has made a true impact in a school or district. In these instances, educators have said they could not have accomplished what they had without the assistance of the coach. On the other hand, there are also places where the educators have said they never quite knew what the coach was for or that the coach never “clicked” with the local personnel. There are also examples of programs that fall somewhere in between these two positions. However, our observation is that often the positive results are due to the top-notch individuals serving as coaches and the alignment of those coaches’ strengths with the specific needs of a given school or district, and not the result of a specific coaching program. This is not to say that the specifics of a program do not matter, because we believe they do. When strong coaches are part of a theoretically sound coaching program and matched with schools and districts with specific needs, we are more likely to see optimal results.

## **Recommendations**

To those people involved in or considering a partnership with a coaching organization, we make the following recommendations. We base these on our

experiences and observations over the last two years and on what we believe are the strengths and limitations of the various coaching approaches we examined. Others may disagree with us, and we welcome those comments.

### **1. Coaching organizations should develop a clear theoretical model(s) guiding the coaching organization and practices.**

These models should be based on sound organizational and adult learning theories, and the coaches should have a clear understanding of those ideas as they develop their coaching practices.

### **2. Coaching organizations need to provide extensive and on-going training for coaches in those models.**

Organizational and adult learning theories are often complex, and the implications of the ideas are not always readily apparent to coaching practitioners. Therefore, coaches should be expected to learn and grow throughout the coaching process, constantly refining their skills and furthering their understanding of adult learning and organizational change.

### **3. Coaching organizations should give special attention to the qualifications for coaches.**

These organizations should ensure that their coaches have not only the personal qualities and practical experiences necessary for success, such as having been a principal or superintendent, but that they also understand adults as learners and organizational dynamics as well. If an organization is using an individual whose knowledge in one or more of these areas is limited, then the organization should plan extensive professional development in areas of weakness.

### **4. Coaching organizations should develop and employ clear written statements of purpose about the coaching function in the districts and schools and clear and written expectations about what the coach should and should not be expected to do.**

Without a clear understanding and agreement among the coaching organization, the coach, the school, and the district, there can be considerable time and effort wasted because of an “ambiguous role definition.” Coaching organizations should clearly delineate these roles and ensure that all involved understand and agree to prior to the placement of a coach in a school or district.

### **5. Coaching organizations should give special attention to the assignment of coaches to schools and districts.**

The importance of a proper match of a coach to a given situation cannot be overstated. Not all coaches have equal abilities in all areas, and not all schools or districts

need the same coaching service. Therefore, organizations should seriously consider a contingency theory of organizations during coaching assignments.

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